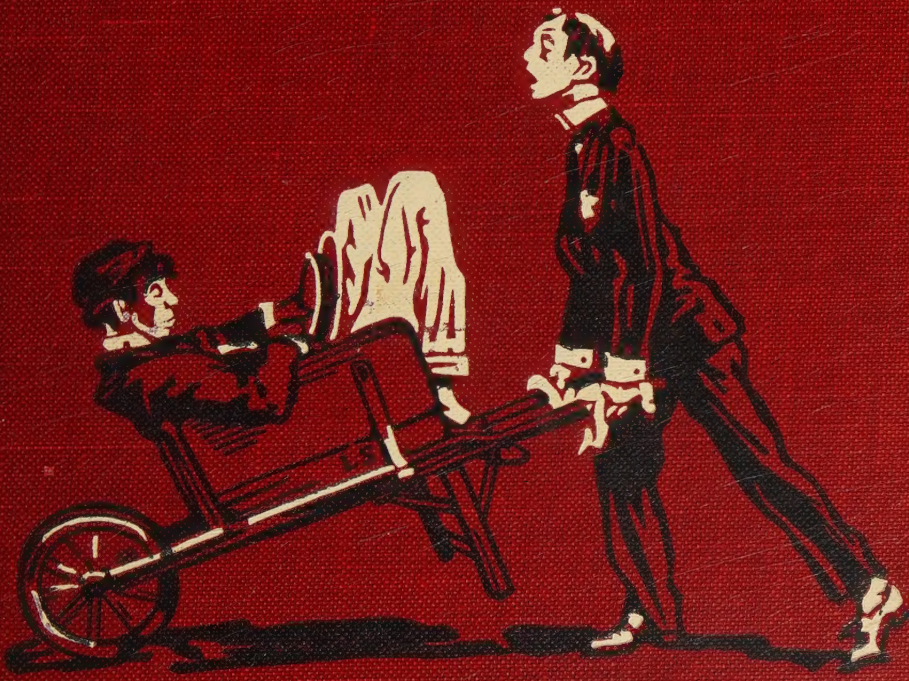
THE TENNESSEE SHAD



OWEN JOHNSON

R. von Dannenberg

Archibald Stuart

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THE TENNESSEE SHAD

By Owen Johnson

Lawrenceville Stories

THE PRODIGIOUS HICKEY
THE VARMINT
THE TENNESSEE SHAD
SKIPPY BEDELLE

STOVER AT YALE
THE WOMAN GIVES
VIRTUOUS WIVES
THE WASTED GENERATION
THE SALAMANDER
MAKING MONEY
THE SIXTY-FIRST SECOND

E. von Dannenberg.

"YOU GO BACK, YOUNG STRIPLING"

(*See page 216*)

THE
TENNESSEE SHAD

A LAWRENCEVILLE STORY

BY

OWEN JOHNSON

AUTHOR OF "THE VARMINT," "STOVER AT YALE," ETC.

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY

F. R. GRUGER

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PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

TO MY FRIEND

ARTHUR B. MAURICE

TO WHOSE SUGGESTION

THE BOOK IS DUE

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THE TENNESSEE SHAD

THE TENNESSEE SHAD

CHAPTER I

THE RISE OF DOC MACNOODER

At the time when the celebrated Doc Macnooder, that amateur practitioner, but most professional financier, first dawned upon the school, he found the Tennessee Shad the admiration and the envy of the multitude. He had not been a week in the school before he, too, was moved to enthusiasm by the Shad's productive imagination — productive in the sense of its consequences to others. Macnooder, at that time unknown, with only the consciousness of greatness within him, conceived at once the mighty ambition to unite this Yankee fertility of ideas to his own practical but imaginative sense of financial returns. This ambition he did not achieve in a day, for the firm of Macnooder and the Tennessee Shad was not finally established until Macnooder, by a series of audacious moves,

forced himself to that position where he could compel the Shad to choose between a partner and a rival.

When the Tennessee Shad leaned against a wall his empty trousers wrapped themselves like damp sheets around his ankles. When he strode forth like a pair of animated scissors his coat hung from the points of his shoulder-blades as though floating from a rake, while his narrow, lengthened head seemed more like a cross-section than a completed structure.

Hickey, The Prodigious, after a long period of mental wrestling, had given him the nickname, and the same was agreed to be Hickey's *magnum opus*. It expressed not simply a state of inordinate thinness, but one of incredible, preposterous boniness such as could only have been possessed by that antediluvian monster that did or did not sharpen its sides on the ridges of Tennessee.

The Tennessee Shad frankly confessed his ambition to be a philosopher, his idea of the same being that of a gloriously languid person who resided in a tub and thought out courses of action over which other people should toil.

His first efforts were naturally directed to the

greatest saving of personal energy. His window opened, his door shut, his lamp was extinguished by a series of ropes which he operated from his bed. On retiring he drew his undergarments through his trousers, tucked the legs carefully in the socks, which in turn were placed in his slippers, and leaned the whole against the chair, on the back of which his undershirt in his shirt, his shirt in his vest, his vest in his coat lay gaping for the morrow. As a result of this precocious grasping of the principles of economics he was able to spring from his bed fully clothed with but two motions, an upward struggle and a downward kick.

The physical inertia was not, however, accompanied by any surrender of the imagination. On the contrary, he liked nothing better than to propose ideas; to lie back, lazily turning a straw in his lips, and to throw out suggestions that would produce commotions and give him the keen intellectual enjoyment of watching others hustle. These little ideas of the Tennessee Shad's, so rapturously hailed at the inception, were not always so admired in the retrospect; especially after the rise of Macnooder to the

practical partnership had introduced the element of aggressive financeering.

Now Doc Macnooder came with no surrounding haze of green, but fully equipped with the most circumstantial manner.

It lies in the annals of the Hamill House that within six hours after the opening of his trunks, he had sold a patent bootjack to the Triumphant Egghead, and a folding toothbrush to Turkey Reiter, disinfected and bandaged the foot of Peewee Davis, who had stepped on a tack, and begun the famous Hamill House March, which was a blend of the vibrant reiterations of a Chinese orchestra and the beatings of a tom-tom man.

Macnooder's early days, as well as his age, remained closely wrapped in mystery and speculation. Many stories moved about; he had shipped before the mast and fought Chinese pirates off Malay; he had been an enforced pirate himself; he had been an actor, touring the country with barn-stormers; he had been a dentist's assistant, a jockey, and a Pinkerton detective. Macnooder never absolutely affirmed any of these reports, and he certainly would never have denied one.

THE FAMOUS HAMILL HOUSE MARCH

He shortly became secretary and treasurer of his House, of his Form, and of each organization to which he was admitted. He played the organ in chapel, represented twenty firms, and plied so thriving a trade in patent and ingeniously useless goods that he was able to refuse a cash offer from the village tradesmen to abandon the field.

But Macnooder was not content. He wished a reputation not simply for ubiquity, but as a hero of some desperate deed of valor and cunning, and so to enter the company of that Machiavellian spirit, the Tennessee Shad, of Turkey Reiter and of Hickey, the incarnation of mischief.

In the days of which I write smoking had still the charm of Eden's apple. Thundering assaults were directed from the pulpit at the Demon Cigarette, which was further described as a Coffin-Nail; and boys whose stomachs rebelled smoked with a thrill at the thought of detection, immediate expulsion, disgrace, and a swift downward career, which nothing could check but the gallows.

Macnooder, either in Chinese junks or as a

detective to screen his features behind a cloud of smoke, had acquired the deathly practice of inhaling the obnoxious weed, and soon began to cast about for a more safely luxurious method of enjoyment than a mattress beside an air-flue.

Now, the Hamill House, relic of the old school, was a rambling structure which had been patched and altered a dozen times, with the result that each story was composed of several levels.

Macnooder was hastening down the back steps from the third floor, one afternoon, when the lacrosse stick he carried at shoulder arms, came in smart contact with a beam, with the result that he reached the landing without the formality of the remaining steps.

He picked himself up wrathfully, and gazed at the offending beam. It was totally unnecessary, in quite an absurd position, impending over a flight of narrow stairs. The more Macnooder studied it, the more curious be became. If it was only a beam, it was of extraordinary thickness and height. If it was not a beam, it must be a sort of blind passage leading directly from his room. But leading where?

"HE HAD SHIPPED BEFORE THE MAST AND FOUGHT CHINESE PIRATES"

Macnooder went softly up the steps and, stretching on tiptoes, gently sounded the plastered obstruction. It certainly gave forth a most promising hollow sound.

Twenty minutes later, "Jay" Gould who had waited patiently below, rushed up in a swearing mood.

"Where in blazes is that impudent, cheeky, all-fired, nervy freshman?" he cried, stamping up in pursuit of the greenhorn who had dared to keep him waiting. But at Macnooder's room he stopped in amazement.

"What in the name of peanuts are you doing?"

"Hush!" said Macnooder, pacing the floor. "Twelve feet from the door and six over."

"He's gone dippy," said Jay, not completely surprised at this solution of Macnooder's many-sided personality.

"Twelve feet minus four leaves eight. Allowing, say, two and a half feet for the width of the passage, it must strike in here somewhere."

Jay Gould, keeping a chair in front of him, carefully advanced, studying first the floor and

then the abstracted, concentrated gaze of Macnooder.

"I say, Doc."

"Don't bother me."

"I say, dear boy, is anything wrong?"

"Come here," said Macnooder, suddenly straightening, with a look of triumph.

"What do you want?"

"Lift your right hand and solemnly swear."

"Swear what?"

"Never to reveal the secret mysteries I am about to unfold to you."

"Come off. What's the answer?"

"Swear."

"Sure."

"I have discovered that the Hamill House hides a secret chamber, a den of horrors, perhaps," said Macnooder darkly.

"How did you find that out?"

"I first suspected it," said Macnooder, rapidly dramatizing the bare facts, "by a strange, pungent, ghoulish odor that has come to me in the dead of the night."

"Poor Doc," said Jay Gould, shaking his head; "he is dippy, after all."

Macnooder, perceiving the time for simple words had arrived, rapidly imparted the accident of his discovery, ending excitedly:

"Jay, that passage starts right above the floor of my closet or you can take your pick of anything I sell, at fifty per cent. off."

Gould was convinced at once.

"But where does it lead?"

"Straight over *back* of your room!"

"Back!"

"Exactly. I've worked it all out. There's a blind hole about six feet square directly back of your closet. What do you think of that?"

"Holy cats!" said Jay Gould, who immediately bolted for his room with Macnooder at his heels. A short comparison of distances, with a craning survey of the shelving roof, convinced them that, in fact, the greatest discovery of the age was at hand.

"You see, my room is a couple of feet higher than yours," said Macnooder excitedly: "I'll dig for it low down in the wall. You saw a trap-door through the floor of your closet and we'll have it cinched."

"This must be a profound secret," said Jay Gould, slightly pale.

"Your hand!" said Macnooder.

Two minutes later, having locked and barred the door, the wide-eyed discoverers were flat on their bellies in Macnooder's closet, Doc stealthily applying a chisel to the plaster which Jay Gould carefully stuffed into a washbag, illegally borrowed from the Pink Rabbit.

"It's hollow, sure enough," said Macnooder, when the plaster had fallen. "Where's the saw?"

"Here you are. Down with the laths."

"Not a sound."

Through the dull rasping of the saw the laths gradually yielded an aperture for the passage of the human body.

"Let's look," said Jay Gould eagerly.

Through the jagged entrance lay a passage mysterious, adventurous, and gloomy, formed by the meeting of the sloping roof and the floor.

"Let's explore it," said Jay Gould, all for action.

"You bet."

MACNOODER STANDING ON TIPTOES SOUNDED THE PLASTERED OBSTRUCTION

"Think of finding it!"

"It's a wonder!"

"Start ahead, Doc."

"Take the honor," said Macnooder magnanimously; "I have had all the fun so far."

"I wouldn't think of it," said Gould resolutely; "you have every right. After you."

"Are you afraid?"

"Are you?"

"Let's toss."

"Beans! I'll go first," said Jay Gould, who feared neither man or master.

"There may have been a murder," said Macnooder, when Gould was safely in. "If you strike any bones, don't rattle them."

Jay Gould at once lit a match.

"The bite of some rats is peculiarly poisonous," continued Macnooder, wriggling like a snake amid the cobwebs.

The first match was immediately succeeded by a second.

"Great Lalapazoozas!"

"What is it?"

"Look at this."

Macnooder hastily hauling himself upon the

passage, found a blind inclosure above five feet square, with a chimney at one side.

"Have a coffin-nail," said Jay Gould, with perfect calm.

"What shall we call it?" said Macnooder instantly.

"The Holy of Holies."

"Your hand again."

"We'll bring rugs and sofa-cushions and crackers and cheese. Eh, what?"

"Sure, Mike."

"Say, who'll we let in on this?"

"It must be a secret locked in the breasts of only a few," said Jay Gould firmly. "Sport McAllister is my room-mate, he'll have to go in."

"Of course. But not the Walladoo Bird — no elephants that will stick their feet through the ceiling."

"Well, how about Shingle-Foot Harris?"

"Agreed; and Tinkles Bell — five; no more!"

"We must take a separate oath of secrecy."

"Sure."

"Sealed with blood."

"Quite so."

"And brand the arms with a burning cigarette."

"What!" said Macnooder; "all of us?"

"No — o, the fellows we let in."

"Oh, absolutely!"

The discovery of the Holy of Holies, destined to be passed down for four successive generations (this is not fiction), unsuspected by masters or uninitiated housemates, still left Macnooder short of the national reputation which he felt was his due. Of course, among the midnight brethren his standing was enormous. But this left him as restless as the right hand when the left hand knoweth not its doing.

From the floor of Jay Gould's closet a trapdoor was constructed, fitting cunningly in natural grooves with a bolt to be drawn below. The only moment of dire peril occurred one afternoon when Shingle-Foot, having gone into the Holy of Holies alone, fell asleep and gave forth snores that shook the House. Luckily, no masters were within, and Macnooder hastily diverted suspicion to himself while Jay Gould, scrambling into the den, seized Shingle-Foot by the throat and brutally throttled the disturber.

Still, the veneration of the inner brotherhood sufficed not. Often of evenings, when lights were out, and they were huddled by the warm bricks in whispered ecstasy lit by the winking sparks of their cigarettes, Macnooder would lapse into revery.

"What's the matter?" one would inquire from time to time.

"I'm working out something — an idea," Macnooder would answer, lapsing into taciturnity.

But the great idea delayed unconscionably. Macnooder's suave good humor turned into a fidgeting irritability. He was only the big man of a House. The nation was beyond these sectional limits with its call to ambition.

Dink Stover had not yet arrived with his Sleep Prolonging Devices but Hickey who had not yet left (by request) had already pre-empted the lists of history with his nocturnal exploits and above all there was the Tennessee Shad, the fertile originator of busy schemes from recumbent positions. About this time a faculty decree was promulgated against the right of every future American citizen to acquire influenza, bronchitis and the catarrhal substitutes, and it

was solemnly announced that henceforth, under odious penalties, every boy should wear a hat.

On the following morning, while the indignation was at its height, a joyful ripple spread over the school, which rushing to the fountain of rumors, beheld the Tennessee Shad lazily slouching across the Circle, equipped with what might legally be termed a hat. The rim of a derby, stripped of every vestige of a crown, reposed upon the indignant upright of his two flanking ears. It had been a hat and it was a hat. It complied with and it defied the tyrannous injunction. A roar of joy and freedom went up and in ten minutes every $3.00 to $5.00 derby in the school was decapitated and the brim defiantly riding on the exposed head of each rebellious imitator.

The incident concentrated the already passionate longings of the young Macnooder. He must pass over the limits of the house. He must rise to national scope. He must prove himself worthy of the complexities of the Tennessee Shad. For Macnooder had that critical enthusiasm for the Shad that the man of practical per-

ceptions has for the irresponsibilities of a man of genius. The imagination of the Tennessee Shad must be turned to practical results, as Niagara, stupendous in itself, has waited for centuries to be harnessed to the pockets of business. He, Macnooder, would prove his right, capitalize the Tennessee Shad, form the firm of Macnooder and the Tennessee Shad, and putting it on a sound business basis, develop it into a source of revenue.

In this mood he was bumping up the stairs one afternoon, when he came to an alarmed and sudden halt. Directly opposite, from the crack of the Pink Rabbit's door, came a faint, but unmistakable odor of tobacco.

Now the Pink Rabbit was among the cherubim and seraphim of the school. Macnooder could hardly believe his senses. He advanced a few steps, cocked his head on one side and drew in a deep breath. The odor was strange, but distinctly of the Demon Tobacco.

Macnooder, hastily sliding around the door, beheld, in fact, the Pink Rabbit, propped up in bed, reading a novel, devouring a box of taffy, and smoking a cigarette.

"For the love of Mike, Rabbit! What are you doing?" he exclaimed.

"What's the matter?" said the invalid hoarsely from his couch.

But here Macnooder suddenly sniffed the air.

"Cubebs!" he said.

"Sure."

"But that's smoking."

"Not at all. Doctor Charlie prescribed them — cure asthma, and all that sort of thing."

"Cubebs are not tobacco?" said Macnooder, who had missed the preliminary stages.

"No, you chump."

"And they're good for colds, you say."

"Hay fever and asthma."

"Well, I'll be jig-swiggered."

Macnooder continued to his room in a state of scientific speculation, halted by the window and, digging his fists into his pockets, stared out at the Circle, around which a dozen fellows were laboriously plodding in penance.

"Cubebs aren't tobacco," he repeated for the tenth time. "By the great horned spoon, there certainly is something in that idea."

That night, in the Holy of Holies, Macnooder

was more silent than usual, though this time it was with a purpose.

"Doc's in love," said Shingle-Foot, suspiciously.

"I believe he is."

"He certainly acts off his feed."

This sally failed to awaken Macnooder.

"She doesn't love him."

"She loves another."

"Poor old Doc."

Macnooder calmed them with a disdainful flutter of his hand.

"I'll tell you," he said impressively, "what's been occupying me."

"Go ahead."

"I'm tired of local reputations."

"Oh, you are," said Sport McAllister critically; for he thought it was time that even Macnooder should be discouraged.

"I am."

"Indeed!—and what will satisfy you, you conceited, brassy, top-heavy squirt?"

"Nothing but an international reputation," said Macnooder, disdaining to notice the mere flight of epithets.

"You don't say so!"

"And now I've got it."

"Dear me!"

"I've got the greatest stunt that was ever pulled off in any school, at any time, in any country."

"Well, we're listening."

"I'll put it this way. What would happen if the faculty got on to the Holy of Holies?"

"I'd be guiding a plow in South Idaho," said McAllister frankly.

"The use of tobacco in any form is prohibited."

"And punishable by suspension," said Jay Gould. "So says the catalogue. Pass the coffin-nails."

"Well, this is what I propose to do," said Macnooder, "I propose to go two times around the Circle, in full sight of every master in the whole place, smoking a cigarette."

"Repeat that," said Jay Gould.

Macnooder firmly complied.

"Oh, at night!" said Tinkles Bell scornfully; "that's an easy one."

"No, in full daylight."

"And remain in the school?"

"And remain in the school."

"Repeat the whole proposition again."

"Are you a betting man?" said Sport McAllister, when Macnooder had stated the proposition the third time.

"First, last and always."

"I will bet you," said Sport McAllister, trying to still the eagerness in his voice, "I will bet you my monthly allowance from now until the close of the year. Take it, it's yours."

"I'll attend to that bet."

"What?" said McAllister, hardly believing his good fortune. "You take it?"

"The word was 'Attend.'"

"To smoke a cigarette while walking twice around the Circle in full daylight, and not get suspended."

"Exactly."

"Will you write that down?" said McAllister, who began to plan how he should enjoy the blessings of Providence.

"We have witnesses."

"When will you do it?" said Jay Gould.

"Within one week."

The next day Macnooder caught a cold which thickened considerably by the following morning. Despite this, he announced to the expectant House that the attempt would be made at one-thirty that afternoon.

Promptly at that hour Sport McAllister, Jay Gould, Tinkles and Shingle-Foot, according to agreement, repaired to the Dickinson House, armed with opera-glasses, and spreading the great news. The word having circulated, the five Houses that bordered the Circle, as well as the long outline of the Upper, were suddenly and theatrically alive with spectators, carefully masked (also according to request) by hand-screens and window-curtains.

"Aw, he'll never dare," said Sport McAllister to the Tennessee Shad, who was furnishing the window.

"Perhaps he's been fired already."

"I'll bet there's a catch in it."

"Why, every master in the place is around now."

"Sure; he couldn't go ten yards before Robinson in the Cleve would nab him."

"Aw, he'll never dare," repeated Sport Mc-

Allister. In the misfortune of his friend, he found not only a certain pleasure, but a promised easing of the money stringency.

"What's that?"

"Where?"

"Just coming behind the trees."

"It's Macnooder!"

"No!"

"It certainly is!"

It was Macnooder, stepping briskly forward. His throat, to emphasize its delicate condition, was wrapped around with several knitted scarfs; while, besides a sweater, he wore in the warm month of October a winter overcoat.

When precisely opposite the Upper, and in full sight of the Houses, Macnooder deliberately halted and bringing forth a box, lighted a *cubeb* cigarette.

Then, puffing it forth voluminously, he started around the Circle. The nearest House was the Cleve, wherein dwelt not only the Muffin Head but Brotherly Love Baldwin, the young assistant, who had new ideas on education.

As luck would have it, at that precise moment

Baldwin was on the threshold, preparing to cross the Circle.

At the sight of Macnooder, steaming briskly along his way, he stiffened one moment with horror; and the next, shot violently after the offender. He did not exactly leap forward, but there was in his advance all the growling rush of a bounding dog.

Macnooder, from the tail of his eye, beheld the sweeping approach and blew forth a particularly voluminous cloud.

"Stop!"

Macnooder came to a halt in gentle surprise.

"How dare you?" exclaimed Baldwin, almost incapable of speech.

"What's wrong, sir?" said Macnooder thickly.

Among the spectators in the Houses there was a sudden terrified craning forward.

"Throw that cigarette down! this instant — you young reprobate!"

Macnooder was seized with a fit of coughing.

"Please, sir," he said finally, "I'm trying to work off a cold. It's only a cubeb."

"A what?"

"A cubeb, sir."

Mr. Baldwin began to suspect that he had bounded into a trap. So he said with dignity:

"Were these prescribed by Dr. Jackson?"

"Oh, yes, indeed, sir. Of course, a cubeb isn't tobacco."

"But smoking is forbidden."

"Oh, no, sir."

"What!"

"Catalogue only forbids use of tobacco. Cubebs are a medicine."

Mr. Baldwin stood rubbing his chin, thoroughly perplexed. Macnooder, with serious face, waited patiently the outcome of his dilemma. Now, of course, Mr. Baldwin could have ordered him to desist from any public display so liable to misconstruction and so upsetting of discipline. But he did not; and the reason was the very human motive that actuates the oppressor and the oppressed. He had been caught, and he wanted someone else to share the ignominy.

When the spying school (who of course saw only a cigarette) actually beheld Mr. Baldwin retire and Macnooder continue on his way, smoking, a spasm of horrified amazement swept

the audience, in the midst of which young Pewee Davis fell from the second story, carrying away the vines.

Nothing more happened until the first turn had been completed, when Macnooder encountered Mr. Jenkins, popularly known as Fuzzy-Wuzzy. Mr. Jenkins was near-sighted; and though he taught mathematics, his perceptions were not those of a lightning calculator.

When, on the pleasant meandering speculation of his mind, Macnooder suddenly intruded, he stopped dead, raising his hand to his spectacles to assure himself that he actually saw.

Macnooder, rounding the turn, saluted respectfully and continued his nonchalant way.

"Macnooder?"

"Yes, sir," said Macnooder, stopping at once.

"Er — er."

Macnooder inclined his head in an expectant sort of way until Mr. Jenkins was quite able to frame his words.

"Are you smoking a cigarette?" said the master slowly.

"A cubeb, sir, not tobacco," continued Macthe cigarette; "breaks up colds, sir."

Mr. Jenkins fidgeted with his eye-glasses and stared very hard at him.

"A cubeb, sir, no tobacco," continued Macnooder, allowing the aromatic odor to drift in his direction.

"A cubeb —" repeated Mr. Jenkins slowly, pulling his beard.

"Yes, sir," said Macnooder.

He waited a moment and tipping his hat went on his way, leaving the perplexed master fairly rooted in his tracks.

Mr. Smith, the Muffin Head, the next to be encountered, was older in experience, and cannier. Likewise, he had witnessed the last encounter; so, instead of risking his reputation by rushing madly forth, he took up a book and started ostensibly for the library, carefully calculating his time and distance so as to cross Macnooder's path without seeming to have sought the meeting.

That there was a trap somewhere, he was convinced. So, carefully repressing the instinctive desire to spring upon the flaunter of the scholastic red rag, he approached all alert. A slight wind brought him the unmistakable odor of the

cubeb. Now, as it happened, he, too, had suffered from bronchial affliction and was no stranger to this remedy. So, when Macnooder came to a stop, he said with a superior smile:

"Yes, what is it, Macnooder?"

"Please, sir, did you want to speak to me?" said Macnooder himself surprised.

"About what?"

"I thought —"

"Oh, about smoking a cubeb? Not at all."

"I beg pardon, sir."

"You have a bad cold, I see."

"Yes, sir! Yes, sir!"

"That's very good for it."

The Muffin Head, chuckling with satisfaction, continued on his way. He, too, in the natural course should have sent Macnooder to his room; but again the little human strain prevented. At the entrance to Memorial, he turned and looked back to see who would fall into the trap he had evaded.

This was too much for the now utterly flabbergasted school — the Muffin Head, of all masters; the strictest of disciplinarians; the most relentless of task-masters! In rapid succession

the school then beheld a dozen more masters take the bait, some fairly galloping down with rage, others suspiciously sniffing the air. By the time Macnooder had completed four rounds, there remained only Mr. Baranson, of the Griswold, who had not been tempted out to investigate.

Macnooder made one more round with his eye on the study of the Griswold, hoping against hope. Finally he said:

"Well, here goes! Someone has put him on — he's too cute to come out!"

Then, secure and triumphant, he discarded the stump of the cubeb and lit a real cigarette, completing, without mishap, twice the rounds of the Circle.

Now, Mr. Baranson, who rightly bore the title of the craftiest of the crafty, had witnessed the whole performance, chuckling hugely at the successive discomfitures of his associates, and finally guessing the explanation.

The Muffin Head, on his return from the library, hoping that he had not been seen, dropped in for an artful call; and at the proper moment paused before the window, exclaiming:

"By George, what's that!"

Mr. Baranson doubled up with laughter at the obviousness of the trap. When he had finally wiped the tears from his eyes, he said in a slightly superior manner:

"Smith, if you're going to deal with boys, you must use your imagination. You must outthink them. That's the only way, Smith; the only way. Don't walk into their traps, don't do it. Every time a master lets himself be fooled, he loses some of his authority. Imagination, Smith; imagination!"

But an hour later, at dusk, he began to consider, to weigh and to speculate; and the more he analyzed the situation, the more he began to wonder if he had seen the last curtain. He left the House and went slowly toward the road Macnooder had traveled, and his eyes were on the ground where the last cigarette stump had fallen. Suddenly behind him a voice said solicitously:

"Have you lost anything, Mr. Baranson?"

It was Macnooder.

The two stood a long moment, master and boy, the craftiest of the crafty and the ambitious

Macnooder, glance to glance, one of those silent interrogatories that can not be described.

"Your cold seems to have gone," said Mr. Baranson at length, dealing out his words. Then he added, with a slightly twitching, generous smile, "I *congratulate you!*"

CHAPTER II

INTRODUCING THE TENNESSEE SHAD

Macnooder's success in performing the impossible feat of circling the Circle smoking a genuine, bona fide non-cubeb cigarette, brought him at once the national reputation he had yearned for, but still left him short of his ambition. The Tennessee Shad had been too long entrenched in his own particular position of public admiration to relinquish a foot of his vantage simply because a new and ingenious claimant had arrived. He considered Macnooder carefully, even solicitously, and listened with deliberation to his crafty schemes of profitable promoting. He was interested but he was not convinced. Once or twice before he admitted Macnooder's equality he would have put him to the test.

Such was the condition of affairs when one Sunday afternoon the House was gathered in Lovely Mead's rooms recuperating from the fa-

tigues of a categorical sermon preached that morning by a visiting missionary.

"Gee, Sunday's a bore!" said the Egghead, on the window-seat, sticking a pin in Lovely Mead's leg to make room for his own.

"Ouch!" said Lovely in surprised indignation. "I've a mind to lick you, Egghead."

"Wish you would — anything for excitement!"

"What let's do?" said Macnooder from under the desk-lamp, where he was pretending to read.

"Let's do something devilish."

"Ah, December's too cold."

"I have an idea," drawled out the Tennessee Shad from the fire-rug, where he lay pillowed on the Gutter Pup's sleepy form. "Let's eat something."

At this there was a mild commotion on the window-seat, where four forms lay curled, puppy fashion.

"Eat what?"

"I was sort of speculating on a Welsh rabbit," said the Shad in a nasal drawl.

"That's about up to your usual brand of ideas, you thin, elongated, bony Tennessee

Shad," said the Gutter Pup contemptuously. "Where are we going to get anything on a Sunday evening?"

"I have a hunch," said the Tennessee Shad languidly. "I have a most particular hunch that Poler Fox was seen Saturday afternoon buying a luscious, fat and juicy piece of cheese at Doc Forman's. Question to the jury: Is or is not that cheese?"

Four figures sat up.

"Poler Fox?"

"What right has he to a piece of cheese?"

"This should be investigated!"

"It should."

"It will be!"

The Tennessee Shad and the Gutter Pup went softly down one flight of the House and along the corridor where Poler Fox burned the midnight oil. They paused and consulted.

"Had we better swipe it or invite him?"

"Let's try to swipe it first — we can always invite him."

"Who ever heard of keeping a cheese over night, anyway?"

"That's right; it's positively unhealthy."

"We really ought to complain."

"Who'll swipe it?"

"I'll get him out of his room," said the Tennessee Shad, "and you rush in and capture the milkweed."

The Gutter Pup, for good reason, did not trust to the purity of the Tennessee Shad's intentions.

"Why don't you do the lifting?" he said suspiciously.

"You ungrateful Gutter Pup, don't you see? — you won't be seen. He'll know I was only a blind. But have it your own way."

"No," said the Gutter Pup. "You go ahead and get him out of the room."

He waited, ensconcing himself on the shadowy steps, until he saw the Shad and Poler Fox emerge and disappear down the resounding corridor. Then, quickly gliding to the abandoned room, he stepped through the door, elevated his nose, sniffed and considered.

Cheeses are not usually left unexposed or permitted to lend their aroma to articles that are to be worn. He could discard the bureau drawers and the trunk. He peered through the win-

dow; it was not on the sill. He opened the closet and drew a long, ineffectual breath. Then getting down on his hands and knees he started under the bed.

At this moment the Tennessee Shad returned with Poler Fox.

"Why, Gutter Pup," said the Shad blandly, "what are you doing under the bed?"

"I came down to borrow a trot," said the Gutter Pup, looking steadily at the Shad; "and I dropped a dime. I think it rolled under the bed."

"You weren't trying to steal Poler's cheese, were you?" said the Tennessee Shad reproachfully.

"Of course I wasn't," said the Gutter Pup indignantly.

"'Cause Poler wants to give a Welsh rabbit party," said the Shad softly, "and he mightn't feel like inviting you if you were abusing his confidence."

The procession returned, the Tennessee Shad keeping a safe distance from the Gutter Pup, with Poler Fox clutching the cheese as his passport into the feast.

Then a crisis arose.

"What're you going to put in it?" said the Egghead skeptically.

"You can't make a Welsh rabbit without beer," said Turkey Reiter.

"Rats!" said the Tennessee Shad. "That's all you know. You can put a dozen things in."

The assembly divided radically.

"Come off!"

"What else?"

"Who ever heard of a rabbit without beer?"

"I've eaten them with condensed milk."

"We made 'em in the Dickinson with ginger pop."

"Anything'll do, so long as there's alcohol in it."

"Oh, murder!"

"Poison!"

"Not at all — they're not half bad."

"Order!" said the Tennessee Shad, rapping on the chafing-dish. "I guess I've eaten and made more Welsh rabbits than any one in this bunch of amateurs. Hungry Smeed is right — you can make them with anything that's got a drop of alcohol in it."

Turkey and the Egghead put up their noses and bayed at the ceiling.

"Contrary-minded can exit."

The protest subsided at once.

"The next best thing to beer is imported ginger ale," said the Tennessee Shad. "Who's got ginger ale?"

A silence.

"Who's got ginger pop?"

Another silence.

"Root beer?"

More silence.

"Sarsaparilla?"

"I have," said the Gutter Pup, jumping up and disappearing under the window-seat.

A cheer went up.

Suddenly the Gutter Pup bounded out.

"I put three bottles of sarsaparilla there Friday night," he said wrathfully. "If I knew the low-livered sneak that would steal —"

"Stealing is contemptible," said the Tennessee Shad softly, while every one looked indignant. "I continue, who's got any cider? Who's got any lemon squash?"

"It's no use," said the gloomy Egghead. "No rabbit for us!"

"We have still our friends," said the persistent Shad. "I move we begin to sleuth. Remember, ginger ale first — but anything after."

The party went off in couples, all except the Tennessee Shad, the Gutter Pup, who didn't trust the Shad, and Poler Fox, who didn't trust the Gutter Pup.

In ten minutes the Triumphant Egghead and Hungry Smeed returned.

"Anything?" said the Tennessee Shad, ceasing to coax the melting mass of cheese.

"Nope."

Lovely Mead came back, and then Macnooder and Turkey Reiter empty-handed. The gloom spread.

"What a beastly shame!"

"And such a sweet cheese!"

"My, what a lovely smell!"

"Well, we're beaten — that's all."

"I have an idea," said the Tennessee Shad. "Let's try witch-hazel."

A howl went up.

"You Indian!"

"You assassin!"

"Eat it yourself!"

"Witch-hazel hasn't got alcohol in it, you ignoramus!"

"Why not?" said the Tennessee Shad militantly.

Every one looked at the Egghead.

"Why not?"

The Egghead found the answer too difficult and remained silent.

"Give me the witch-hazel," said the Tennessee Shad stirring the rabbit with determined swoops. "Now just let me give you a point or two. It's only the alcohol that counts, you jayhawkers; the rest evaporates — goes up in steam."

"Hold up," said the Egghead, who had recovered.

"What's wrong?"

"I don't stand for that scientific explanation of yours."

"Nor I," said Lovely Mead, whose father was a chemist. "Say, Doc, you ought to know. How about it?"

Now Doc Macnooder had more than a doubt,

but he worshipped the fertility of the Tennessee Shad and moreover was seeking an opportunity to make a direct offer of partnership. So he looked wise and said:

"The Tennessee Shad is right with this important distinction. The witch hazel will resolve itself into a modicum, ahem, of alcohol if heated separately and kept from contact with the cheese which you understand, in a state of transmutation, has certain lacto-basilic qualities that arrest vaporization. It's quite simple if you understand it."

The Tennessee Shad gave him a grateful look.

"Say, Sport," said Turkey, only half reassured, "you may be right, but go slow — sort of coddle that witch-hazel. Let it taste more of Doc Forman's grocery, if it's the same to you."

"Sure!" said the Tennessee Shad. "I'll put in an extra load of mustard and cayenne. Get those plates ready, you loafers. Dish out the crackers. Here goes!"

Eight plates stood untasted.

"Strange how my appetite's gone," said the Egghead dreamily.

"I don't feel a bit hungry."

"Some one taste it."

"Taste it yourself."

"Here, this won't do," said the Shad, frowning. "Let's all begin together."

Eight spoons made a feint toward the new species of rabbit.

The Tennessee Shad looked thoughtful, then spoke.

"Fellows, I've got an idea! Let's make it sweepstakes."

"Good idea."

"Why, Shad, you're getting intelligent."

"We'll each chip in a nickel and the first one through takes the pot," said the Shad. "Hungry, pass the tooth-mug."

The nickels fell noisily.

"One, two, three!" said the Tennessee Shad.

Eight spoons brandished in the air and rose again empty.

"Well, let's make it worth while," said the Shad. "Let's sweeten it with a quarter apiece. Sweepstakes, two dollars and forty cents. Hungry, lead the mug around again."

Each, as he dropped in a quarter, gazed deep into the mug, drew a breath and set his teeth —

two dollars and forty cents was a fortune, two weeks before Christmas.

"Every one in?" said the Tennessee Shad. "No hunchin', Gutter Pup and Hungry, start fair — one, two, three, go!"

Not a boy faltered — Hungry Smeed won from the Gutter Pup by several strings and dove for the pot.

Then they sat and looked at one another.

"Gee, I feel queer!" said Turkey, with an expression of inward searching on his face.

"So do I."

"I believe we're poisoned."

"I know I am!"

"Honest, no joking, I do feel devilish queer."

"What in the deuce did we do it for?"

"Who suggested witch-hazel?" said the Gutter Pup, clutching at his indignant digestion. "I'll fix him."

"Yes, who did?" said Turkey, rising with difficult wrath.

"Tennessee Shad!"

Seven writhing forms sprang up furiously.

The Tennessee Shad, with a perfect comprehension of dramatic values, had slipped away, leaving his plate untouched.

CHAPTER III

THE BEGINNING OF THE FIRM

Doc Macnooder bore no grudge. Even the recollected spasms of what might properly be termed his youthful *In*digestion, brought with them no feeling of malice toward the Tennessee Shad. On the contrary though his attempts at a mercantile union were continually repulsed, the determination held fast within him to turn to profit what was now only turned to mischief, and accident finally supplied the welding touch in the following manner.

In those days when the Gymnasium was still an oft-promised land, the winter term, from January to April, was to the embattled Faculty what the Indian season was to the early pioneers. Four hundred-odd, combustible boys, deprived of outlet, cooped up for days by slush and sleet, presented in miniature that same state of frothy unrest from which spout forth South American somersaults and Balkan explosions.

It takes usually two weeks for the exhausted boy to recuperate from the Christmas vacation, but from about the twentieth of January the physical body overtakes the imagination and things begin to happen.

Toward the first week of February there gathered in the Triumphant Egghead's room ten disgusted members of the House, utterly wearied with life, especially bored with the present and without the slightest hope for the future.

Outside a steady, sleety downpour brought feeble icicles from the roof and ran rivulets through the muddied snowbanks.

"Now, it's turned to rain again," announced Hungry Smeed, with his nose applied to the window-pane while his waving heels cast shadows on the wall. Nice, wet, oozy, luscious rain."

"Let's all go bicycling," said Lovely Mead facetiously.

"What time is it?" asked the Gutter Pup from the crowd on the couch.

"Just two o'clock."

A groan went up.

"Is that all?"

"Thought it was after four."

"What is there to do?"

"It's still raining, fellows," said Smeed from the window, and the conversation ceased.

"Do you think Yale'll beat Princeton?" asked Turkey Reiter at last.

"Stop trying to make conversation," said Doc Macnooder resentfully, "and don't move any more; you're the deuce of a sofa pillow."

"Who's going to the Prom?" inquired Crazy Opdyke feebly.

"Crazy, you annoy me," said Butcher; "you annoy me and disturb my rest. Don't propound questions."

"Say, fellows!" said Smeed in great excitement.

"What?"

"It's snowing!"

The door opened a crack and the Tennessee Shad slipped in.

"What's doing, fellows?"

"We're exhausted with excitement!" said Old Ironsides Smith sarcastically. "We're trying to rest up for the next debauch, you precocious young skeleton."

"Say, fellows, I've got an idea," said the Tennessee Shad, draping himself over the desk.

"Oh, go away!"

"It's a corker!"

"Huh! Another of those witch-hazel rabbits?"

"No, no," said the Tennessee Shad, hurriedly skipping that disastrous episode. "This is a sensation!"

"Of course!"

"Never mind — let him speak his piece."

"Let's form," said the Tennessee Shad slowly — "let's form a Criminal Club."

"A what?"

Macnooder, with an awakening hope, sat up, wondering if the brain factory was again working.

"Criminal Club — convicts and that sort of thing. We'll shave off our heads and go about lock-step."

"And initiate new members?" cried Goat Finney.

"Sure."

"And go into chapel to-morrow morning lock-step?"

"Of course!"

"Gee, what a peach of an idea!"

"Can you see the Doctor's face?"

"Oh, mother!"

"Hurray!"

"Hurrah!"

"Hurroo!"

Into the dry pit of baffled energy an idea had fallen, and in a moment all was flame and fury.

"Shad, this is a good one," said Turkey, rousing himself. "We'll call it quits on that rabbit — only — only, remembering the past, we would like to have assurances from you, assurances and guarantees."

"I second the motion most emphatically," said the Gutter Pup revengefully.

The fate of the Criminal Club hung in the balance.

"Look at this," said the Tennessee Shad. And he removed his sombrero.

From ear to ear, from the nape of his neck to the blade of his nose, he was as smooth as a china egg. The day was won in a rollicking cheer.

"Oh, look at him! Look at him!"

"Isn't he wonderful?"

"Bee-oo-tiful!"

"Me for a convict!"

"Can you see the sensation?"

"Bully for the Shad!"

"Let's do it now."

"Come on!"

Five minutes of scurrying to and fro, for scissors and shaving kits, and the Triumphant Egghead's room presented the spectacle of an improvised barber shop.

"How'll we begin?" said the Gutter Pup.

"Who goes first?"

"Supposin' we draw for it."

"Who does the shaving?"

"We can't shave back of our own ears."

"The way to do it," said Macnooder, looking at the Tennessee Shad, "is for one-half of us to shave the other half."

"That's it."

"Let her go at that."

"Who first?"

But here a difficulty arose. No one cared to go first.

"This won't do," said the fiery-headed Gutter

Pup, repulsing the offers of Doc Macnooder. "If I'm going to shed my shade trees — I don't trust any man, least of all Doc Macnooder."

"What do you mean?"

"I mean no one scalps any of my hair till I get a guarantee off his."

"Rats!" said the Tennessee Shad. "Gutter Pup's a natural-born kicker. Go ahead, Doc, and give him an object-lesson."

But Macnooder, though sympathetic to the Tennessee Shad, was on the defensive as far as it concerned the Gutter Pup.

"In the present state of the Gutter Pup's mind — no!" he said thoughtfully. "No, I've got to see a nice white boulevard on those red lands before I consent to laying out mine."

"Will some one else start her up?"

In the silence that ensued Old Ironsides noisily dropped a pin.

"Shad," said the pessimistic Egghead, "it's a good scheme of yours, a bully good scheme; the only trouble is there doesn't seem to be enough mutual confidence. I guess the verdict'll have to be premature death."

"Shad, old sporting print," said Turkey, "have you any suggestion for harmony?"

"Nothing easier," said the Tennessee Shad, locking the door and pocketing the key. "There's one guarantee and here's another. Stand up, form a circle, every one face the man to his right, grab the shoulders of the man in front of you, sit down slowly on the knees of the fellow behind you, the fellow in front sits down on yours, slowly, *slowly*. There you are. That's the way the Zouaves do it."

The ten found themselves in a circle, comfortably seated and seating.

"There's the answer," said the ringmaster triumphantly; "you shave and get shaved, no first and no last; the happy family; safety razors only. Now, get up, stick on the towels and start with the scissors first."

The Tennessee Shad enthroned himself on a table as master of ceremonies, while the hilarious circle formed about him in a bedlam of exclamation.

"How the deuce is Hungry Smeed going to reach up to Turkey?"

"Stick him on a chair, you chump!"

"I don't want the Gutter Pup."

"Aw, send him over here."

"Stop bobbing that head, you Butcher."

"Shorten the circle."

"I can't get Crazy's scalp lock."

"When do we begin?"

"Say when, Shad."

"All ready."

"Let her go!" said the Tennessee Shad from his perch.

Pretty soon protests broke out.

"Ouch!"

"Do you think you're biting them off?"

"Be a litle careless back there."

"Say, who's got the Gutter Pup? Murder him!"

"Moses!"

"Kezowy!"

"Help!"

"Better be careful," said the Tennessee Shad warningly; "in a moment you're going to face the other way."

The shears snipped more gently.

"What do we do when we get through the back?" said Goat Finney.

"You lather it and shave."

"What about the rest?"

"The front's easy enough; any one can do that."

In an hour every head was as bald as a sapling in a hurricane. They stood and gazed at one another, shrieking with laughter. They hugged one another, rolled on the floor in joyful battling groups, and blessed the imagination that had turned a slough of despond into a vaudeville. On the last stroke of the dinner-bell, solemnly, in lock-step, led by Hungry Smeed and grading up to the mighty Turkey Reiter, eleven glistening heads in sequence descended on the dining-room. At the same moment, from the north entrance, appeared a chain-gang of eight, equally void of hair, led by Mucker Reilly, followed by Snorky Green, Beauty Sautelle, Tough McCarthy, Charlie De-Soto, Piggy Moore, Pink Rabbit and the Waladoo Bird!

The duplicity of the Tennessee Shad was forgotten in the masterly climax he had imagined. The rival clubs met and agreed to proselyte and divide the school.

At eight o'clock the next morning, when the Doctor, all unaware, stood in his pulpit, rubbing his glasses and shooting careful glances along the crowded pews, suddenly a shriek went up. Marching proudly with gleeful faces, two gangs of bald-headed boys suddenly appeared abreast, and in rhythmic step came down the aisles amid the gasps, the shrieks and roars of the school.

Now, there are two things a head master must control: his temper and, above all, his sense of humor. The situation was serious; a smile would have been fatal. Something had to be done at once or within a day there would not be enough hair left in the excited school to tuft the head of a Japanese doll. He set his teeth and stared his most terrific stare at a point where the double row of bald heads faded from the vision. Luckily the service allowed him to stifle his amusement and fan up his wrath by calling up the horrible vision of the threatening epidemic.

"Never in my experience, in my whole experience as a scholar or a teacher," he began, glaring with painful ferocity at the denuded

culprits, "never have I known such willful, malicious and outrageous desecration of the house of the Lord as you young scalawags have shown to-day. I do not know whether I shall expel you outright or deprive you of your diplomas; I shall wait until I can consider the matter more calmly. But this I can say right now, if any other incipient imbecile in this school dares to imitate this exhibition of monumental asininity that boy will leave this school within an hour and never return. I will see these deluded boys in my study after lunch."

The members of the newly-formed Housebreakers' Union went out quietly, stealing apprehensive glances at one another.

At two o'clock, as they huddled together in the solemn study, each striving to occupy an unexposed position, T. Dean Smith, secretary, appeared, and, after gazing in fascination at them, said:

"Well, boys, you certainly have riled the Doctor this time. You'd better go back quietly."

"Oh, Smithy, won't he see us?" said the Pink Rabbit in a panic, while others exclaimed:

"Is he going to fire us?"

"Will he take away our dips?"

"What does he say?"

"Is he mad as a hornet?"

"He says he won't trust himself to see you now," said Smith gravely, without mentioning the reason why the mirth-tortured Doctor wouldn't trust himself to face that side-splitting spectacle. "I'd lay pretty quiet for a while, if I were you fellows. Let it blow over a little."

"Gee!" said the Tennessee Shad in disgust, as they filed through the gloomy portals. "Can't he have a sense of humor?"

T. Dean Smith glanced at the curtains of the Doctor's sanctum, but did not reply. Instead he stood on the top step gazing down on them with a sardonic smile.

"You'll be a beautiful sight at the Prom, you will!" he said and entered the house. His words fell like a bomb.

"Geewhilikens!"

"Holy cats and mice!"

"I never thought of that!"

"Give me the dunce cap!"

"Of all the fools!"

"Goats!"

"Asses!"

"Idiots!"

"My whole family's coming."

"The family's not what's worrying me."

"Who started us on this fool stunt?"

"The Tennessee Shad."

"Rough-house him!"

"Hold up! I'm in the same boat," cried the Tennessee Shad. "Don't lose your blooming heads; the Prom's two weeks off!"

"Two weeks?" shouted the Gutter Pup, with a glitter in his eye. "What's two weeks going to do? Do you think we can get respectable in two weeks?"

"Nothing easier," said the Tennessee Shad. "Hair tonic!"

"Fall in line," said Macnooder, seizing instantly the suggestion.

The eleven convicts and the eight housebreakers assumed a chain-gang formation.

"About face!"

"Mark time!"

"Right, left!"

"Forward, march!"

Lock-step, pounding the ground, they went

swiftly toward the village and descended on the vendors of hair lotions.

That night the commercial Macnooder appeared at the rooms of the Tennessee Shad and found the door barricaded. He knocked gently in a coaxing friendly way.

"Who's that?" said the Tennessee Shad after their eyes had met, through the keyhole.

"Hist! It's Doc Macnooder. Open up."

"I'm studying," said the Tennessee Shad, too tired to choose his lies.

"Shad I come not to take your hard-earned money but to do you good," said Macnooder soothingly, using his well known formula. "Will you listen?"

"Elucidate," said the Tennessee Shad, drawing up a chair on his side of the door.

Macnooder camping down said with the confidence that a great idea alone can inspire:

"Shad, I've approached you many a time and oft with a few little suggestions for adding a few coupons and bonds to our worldly possessions. You have rejected my partnership."

"I have a soul above money," said the Shad,

moving his ear however, a little closer to the keyhole.

"This is my last, positively last offer," said Macnooder firmly. "Accept it and we sign articles of partnership, share and share alike, in a month you will drive your own horse and carriage, wear diamond studs and sport a jewel-studded gold pencil,—refuse and —"

"And what?" said The Tennessee Shad.

"You won't refuse, you can't refuse! Now listen."

Three minutes later the bolts slipped and the Tennessee Shad led Doc Macnooder to the easy chair and propped him up with cushions.

That night the joyful Macnooder transformed his room into a barber shop, with rows of lotions and glassy ointments, announced the Tennessee Shad as partner and hung out this shingle:

THE IMPERIAL TONSORIAL PARLORS
MACNOODER AND THE TENNESSEE SHAD
BOSS BARBERS
CASH, MORE CASH, AND NOTHING BUT CASH!

Massage .....$ .03

Friction with any hair encourager ..... .05
Vaselining ..... .03
Three-in-One ..... .10
Two weeks' treatment 1.25

No towels supplied.

The Macnooder treatment coaxes forth the hair, seizes and stretches it, makes it long and curly. Long and curly hair means social success at the Prom; social success means retaining the affections of the fair!

Don't hesitate, don't calculate, do it now!

Come early, come often and bring the children!

Two weeks to cover their nakedness, two weeks to meet the all-seeing feminine eye. That night, each greased hopeful went to bed with a prayer for the morrow.

At the stroke of the rising bell the Gutter Pup catapulted out of bed and flung himself anxiously before his mirror and remained transfixed with despair at the sight of two elephantine ears flanking a snow-white cranium that had not been covered over night with hair. At this moment a groan arose from Lovely Mead's room across the study.

"Is that you, Lovely?" said the Gutter Pup, fascinated by the horrible caricature in the mirror.

"It is."

"What luck?"

"Nothing!"

"Nothing here."

The door opened on the Triumphant Egghead and Hungry Smeed in pajamas.

"What luck, you fellows?"

"Don't ask!"

"I've got a couple of shoots on top," said the Egghead; "but that's where Butcher Stevens' razor missed me. Isn't it awful?"

"When do you suppose it'll come out again?"

"There must be something to-morrow morning."

"What will we look like at the Prom?"

"I'm desperate," said the Triumphant Egghead. "I've got an Apollo Belvedere rival who stays at home. Jerusalem, where will I be now when she sees this!"

"We must load up with starchy food and drink lots of phosphates at the jigger shop," said Hungry Smeed wisely.

"Do you think anything'll show up by to-morrow?"

"Oh, Lovely, it must!"

"How're the others?"

"Smooth as a rink."

Every spare hour was spent in following a new theory; if persistency and ingenuity could have done it they would have succeeded, or had there been any faith in newspaper advertisements or honor in the labels of patent hair-restorers.

They rubbed and greased and dosed themselves, they caught at the first shoots and shut their jaws and pulled, morning, afternoon and night, and at last, when the inexorable Prom. came galloping in, they went in hangdog fashion, balking and blushing, to meet the shrieks that greeted their first bow.

. . . . . .

That night the Tennessee Shad sat among the lonely anti-fussers who roosted on the chilly edges of the Esplanade and scoffed at the gayety within.

It was cold, uncomfortably cold, and one by one the frost-nipped spectators slipped away until only the Tennessee Shad remained, fascinated.

As each stubble-covered, flap-eared dupe bumped his embarrassed way into view he half closed his eyes and smiled a contented, far-away smile.

The Tennessee Shad had never danced!

CHAPTER IV

FIRST JOINT OPERATION

The returns from the two weeks of rushing business of the Imperial Tonsorial Parlors made quite a respectable dividend to celebrate the inception of the firm, especially as the Triumphant Egghead, who was in difficult competition for the affections of a blonde, had plunged desperately in the vaselining and the massage.

The formation of the firm was still a matter of secrecy, unsuspected by the public, a fact which alone made possible the next operation.

When January and February have been endured, the limbo month of March is certainly the most fatiguing of the whole year. It belongs neither to the winter family nor to the aristocracy of the spring. It is peevish, malicious and the spirit of negation. When it shines overhead, with vaulted blues and lazy clouds that invite soaring baseballs to them, it is treacherous and

foul underfoot. When it snows it brings no sleighing. When it freezes it is not to spread the pond for skating, but to harden the mud ruts and delay the opening of the diamonds. Month of corduroys and leathern boots, of waiting and longing, when sinkers overrun the table and the vegetables taste of the can, when the greatest boon is a case of pink-eye or German measles (real or feigned), which gives you the right to doze and browse and play games with other fortunate inmates of the infirmary on the Hill.

The Triumphant Egghead sat on the ledge of the Esplanade and expressed these sentiments in more direct terms, while his whole conception of existence was centered in making a tennis-ball strike the shoulder of an opposite ledge so as to bound back into his hands. From an upper window the Gutter Pup and Lovely Mead looked out in disgust at the sky because it had no sun, at the earth because it was unfit to gambol on, and more particularly at the Triumphant Egghead for having enough energy to sit there and bounce a ball.

Presently the Egghead's fingers slipped and the ball, escaping, rolled away. He watched it

streak wetly down the Esplanade, hesitate and then topple down the steps and trickle languidly along the slimy surface, coating itself with rich yellow ooze. Then, falling off the ledge, he stretched himself and shuffled heavily up to join the Gutter Pup in Turkey Reiter's room.

"My, you're energetic!" said Lovely Mead.

The Egghead grunted, selected a soft spot and lay down.

The Gutter Pup continued gazing out the window with malicious joy at Cap Keefer and the candidates returning from their mud bath in the baseball cage.

"Hello!" he said suddenly. "There goes Doctor Charlie into the Dickinson with his little green bag."

"Wonder who's sick," said the Egghead. "Lucky fellow!"

"Wish I were," said Turkey Reiter.

"Same here," said the Gutter Pup.

"It's such a pleasure to be ill with Doctor Charlie," said Lovely Mead ruminatively. "He has such nice little white pills and such round brown pills and such great big black pills that decorate a mantelpiece so nicely!"

"Think of sleeping two luscious weeks at the infirmary."

"Hum!"

"Don't Turkey, don't — it's cruel."

"Why, here comes the Tennessee Shad," said the lookout, "just as fast as he can come. My, just see how he hops along!"

"He'd better keep away from here," said the Egghead, running his hand over the still prickly hairs.

"He will, if he knows what's good for him," remarked Turkey Reiter.

"I only wish he would drop in!" said the Gutter Pup, doubling up his fists and annihilating a sofa pillow.

"I think, fellows," said the Egghead, squirming to and fro so as to scratch his back, "I say I think the Tennessee Shad's usefulness in this community it just about over."

"He won't catch me again," said the Gutter-Pup. "If he brought me a ten-dollar guaranteed goldpiece on a solid silver platter I wouldn't so much as reach out my hand for it."

"His murder would be quite justifiable," said the Egghead, thinking of the Prom. "It will

take me a couple of natural lives to live down the effect of that hair-cut. I was not beautiful."

"Ugh!"

"Don't — don't recall it!"

"Gee, my girl's stopped corresponding."

At this moment the Tennessee Shad opened the door, inserted a cautious portion of his sharp features and said genially:

"Ah, there!"

Three vicious sofa cushions slam-banged against the door, accompanied by an explosion of wrath.

"Get out!"

"Cut loose!"

"Vanish!"

"Hold up," said the Tennessee Shad, opening the door again. "I've got an idea!"

Two books and a couple of slippers came smashing through the air.

"You'll regret it," said the Shad, bobbing in and out.

The Gutter Pup banged the door and locked it. Outside was heard the scraping of a chair along the hall, then the transom turned and the glit-

tering eyes of the Tennessee Shad appeared over the door.

"Shad, you are a brave man," said Turkey Reiter ominously. "Go away — do go away while we can still control ourselves."

"Fellows, I have come to apologize," said the Tennessee Shad, while the chair squeaked protestingly.

"Keep your apologies," said Lovely Mead. "We loathe the sight of you. Get out!"

"To apologize and atone," added the Tennessee Shad, keeping a watchful eye on the Gutter Pup, who was reaching out for a baseball bat.

"Atone!" said the Egghead with a bitter laugh. "Much good that'll do me."

"Yes, atone, Egghead," said the Shad firmly. "I'm sorry; I feel bad — I do feel bad. I'll admit that my ideas sometimes miscarry, but I have had good ones — you know I've had good ones, and this idea is a good one!"

The Gutter Pup raised the baseball bat, but Turkey Reiter restrained him.

"No, Gutter Pup; let's hear it," he said; "let's know the depth of his depravity. Let's have no illusions about him."

"I'll back my idea," said the Tennessee Shad stoutly.

"How'll you back it?"

"I'll tell you how I'll back it. I'll back it against all you fellows — the whole longeared lot of you. You let me in and promise to keep your hands off me till you hear my idea and, if you don't fall down and kiss my hand and say: 'Shad you're a public benefactor; can you ever, ever forgive us?' — if you don't say that, well, I'm willing to be massacred any time or any how. Now, can you imagine what sort of an idea it is?"

The four looked mutely at one another. Finally Turkey spoke.

"Tennessee Shad, you always did have a persuasive, silvery voice, and as my fondest hope for the future is to be associated with you in selling anything to anybody I'm going to let you in. Pup, let down that bat. Egghead, open the door."

The Tennessee Shad glided in, locked the door in turn and shut the transom with much mystery.

"First," he said, "give me your word of honor

that you'll keep this a dead secret. No blabbing and no one else to be let in on it. Promise."

"Hold up, this wasn't in the agreement," said the Egghead stubbornly.

"No promise, no secret!"

"That's fair," said Turkey.

They raised their right hands and solemnly swore.

"And no mental reservations," said the Tennessee Shad severely, looking at the Gutter Pup, "if you're gentlemen!"

"Of course not. Say, what do you think we are?"

"All right."

The Tennessee Shad climbed on a chair and roosted on the back in his familiar manner, plucked forth a pencil, chewed it meditatively and said:

"Are you happy?"

"What the deuce has that got to do with it?" said the Gutter Pup, tightening his grip on the baseball bat, while the Egghead added irately:

"Turkey, it's a con game — he's kidding us."

"Oh, let him tell it his own way," said Turkey.

"Are you happy? Are you cheerful?" con-

tinued the Tennessee Shad pursuing the Socratic method. "Do you enjoy your meals? Do the words fresh vegetables mean anything to your jaded appetites? Do they?"

"Go on, and don't be idiotic."

"Does the prospect of wallowing two weeks in the mud fill your soul with rapture? Are you still eager to rise at an unearthly hour, to eat the deadly sinker and the scrag bird?"

"What are you driving at?" said Turkey, mystified. "You know the answers as well as we do. What's your scheme?"

"How would the idea of spending these next two weeks like this appeal to you?" said the Tennessee Shad, pointblank: "Sleeping late, eating cream in your coffee — not cream, but *real* cream — thick, lumpy, soggy cream — no chapel, no recitations — nothing! Would two weeks in the infirmary appeal to you as an idea?"

"Would it?" said Lovely Mead, opening his eyes. "Jemima!"

The Gutter Pup put away the baseball bat, leaning it gently in the corner.

"Think of nothing to do all day long," continued the Tennessee Shad, half shutting his eyes,

"but to read novels and play cards and games! Think of having special steaks and nice, juicy chops to build up your delicate bodies!"

"Oh, Shad!" cried the converted Gutter Pup. "How are you going to work it?"

The Tennessee Shad came back to earth, gave a vicious last bite on his pencil, pocketed it, slapped his knee and cried:

"German measles!"

"German measles?" repeated the four.

"Shad!"

"You don't mean it!"

"Who's got 'em?"

"Oh, joy!"

Now, German measles are not an affliction, but a dispensation of Providence, and the boy who in the month of March is thus blessed and discovers it before the doctor does is in honor bound to share his good fortune with his neighbors.

"I know," said the Gutter Pup suddenly. "It's over in the Dickinson. I saw Doctor Charlie trotting in."

"Naw!" said the Tennessee Shad disdainfully. "I've looked into that — that's nothing but Wee-

Wee Logan faking up a case of pink-eye. Mine's the real, genuine article. Are you on?"

"Are we on?"

"Say, just lead us up to him!"

"Quick!"

"It's Doc Macnooder, on the second floor," said the Tennessee Shad. "But, mind, only we four get in on this. We don't want to sleep two in a bed."

"But, Shad, how do you know?"

"How can you be sure?"

"Doc knows the symptoms," said the Shad. "He's had 'em before; besides, he's going to be a doctor."

"For Heaven's sake, fellows, let's get to him."

"We mustn't lose a minute."

"Come on."

"Hold up," said the Tennessee Shad. "There's a condition attached to it."

The four seekers after infection drew up and eyed the glib impressario.

"There generally is a string to your ideas," said the Gutter Pup; "and we're getting very much to dislike those strings."

"That's dead right!"

"I wouldn't get too careless this time, young sporting life!"

"I never saw such a distrustful bunch," said the Tennessee Shad; "and the whole thing is to protect you, too."

"What do you mean?"

"I mean this," said the Tennessee Shad with an injured air. "I drew up a contract with Doc that we get exclusive rights and have to pay him a dollar down. Do you want the whole House started for the infirmary before we can get a look-in? If you don't think it's worth a quarter — oh, well — I guess I can find — "

"Excuse me," said Turkey Reiter, pulling out a coin, "you are a miracle of foresight."

"Pardon me," said the Gutter Pup, making change.

"Will this bright new quarter do?" said Egghead.

"You fellows ought to think twice before you shout," said Lovely Mead, completing the dollar.

"I had German measles second-form year," said the Egghead as they descended the stairs. "They're delightful!"

"How long does it take to catch 'em?" asked the Gutter Pup.

"About a week."

"That's an awful time to wait!"

"Hush, here we are," said the Tennessee Shad, stopping and knocking on door 48.

A slight swishing sound was heard on the other side and a catarrhal voice said:

"Who's there?"

"It's me," said the Tennessee Shad. "It's all right, Doc; open up."

The key turned and they filed into a room encased with green, black and blue bottles arranged on shelves, heaped in corners, scattered everywhere.

Macnooder, swathed in neck-cloths, dressed in a green-and-blue bathgown, red Mephistopheles slippers and violet garters, sank back into an easy-chair and disappeared a moment behind a voluminous handkerchief.

The four proselytes stood by the door.

"Say, old sporting Tootlets," said the cautious Turkey, "German measles is most pleasant, but real measles isn't what we're looking for. What's

to guarantee us we get what we pay our money for and not a gold brick?"

"You can't have measles twice, you ignoramus," said Macnooder with a sneeze. "I had 'em four years ago."

"You'll guarantee us?" said the Gutter Pup.

"Not to have measles? Sure, I will. I'll post a forfeit, five apiece."

"That's good, straight talk," said the Tennessee Shad briskly. "Don't be an ass, Gutter Pup. Now, Doc, if you'll give us your word not to let any one else in on this, here's that dollar we agreed upon."

"So help me!" said Macnooder, jingling the coins in his pocket.

"Hold up there," broke in Lovely Mead; "all very well, but how're we going to know you'll carry out the bargain?"

"He's going to Trenton this afternoon," said the Tennessee Shad. "He's got an aunt living there."

"Is that so, Doc?"

"Just as soon as I get through with you fellows and get in Doctor Charlie."

"Well," said Turkey, "I don't see but what it's a go."

Macnooder rose, drew a carpet over the crack under the door, stuffed the keyhole with cotton and lit an alcohol lamp.

"What's that for?" said the Egghead, whom the presence of so many labeled bottles rendered uneasy.

"Cold kills germs, heat develops them," said Doc with a superior air. "Come on, Shad, you first!"

The Tennessee Shad seated himself opposite, touching knees and foreheads, while the others looked on in fascinated admiration.

"Grab my hands," said Doc solemnly, "and take long breaths."

One week later the Gutter Pup began to cough, Lovely Mead to sneeze and Turkey Reiter and the Triumphant Egghead to snuff and sniffle; only the Tennessee Shad remained disconsolate. Doctor Charlie, joyfully summoned, found the five waiting in Turkey Reiter's room, applied a thermometer and looked very solemn.

"Catarrhal symptoms and febrile disturbance," he said. "Pack up your things and get right up to the infirmary." Then, considering the Tennessee Shad thoughtfully, he added:

"You have a slightly heightened temperature, but that may be only imagination. However, I think I won't risk it; you go up, too."

An hour later the five were shaking hands and slapping one another on the back in the cozy parlor of the infirmary.

"Well, you old growlers," said the Tennessee Shad proudly, "are my ideas always useless?"

"Shad," said Turkey, "you are reinstated in our affections. We love you. You are our pride and joy."

"I hope," said the Egghead, drawing up by the crackling fire, "that it'll rain and slush the whole time we're here."

"Gee, it certainly is good indoors," said Lovely Mead, squatted before the bookshelves.

"What'll come next?" said the Gutter Pup with thick speech. "I certainly have got you all beat on the snuffles."

"Look out for a little pink rash to-morrow morning," said the Egghead wisely.

"Does it itch bad?"

"Naw, it only tickles for a day."

"I suppose we'll have to stay in bed one day at least."

The Tennessee Shad stood, legs akimbo, gazing into the fire.

"Why so silent, old Shad?" said the Triumphant Egghead.

"I don't understand it."

"Understand what?"

"Why I didn't take," said the Shad dejectedly, "I haven't any symptoms at all. I faked up a temperature, but I can't keep that up."

"Old sporting life," said Turkey with a grin, "this is one on you!"

"It certainly is, Shad," said the Egghead with a chuckle.

"Poor old Shad!" said the Gutter Pup, winking at the others. "What an awful sell. But it was coming to you, old hoss; it certainly was coming to you."

"You ungrateful, spiteful little beast," said the Tennessee Shad.

There never was such a dinner as they sat down to that night.

"My, what a steak," said the Gutter Pup languidly; "soft and red and juicy."

"Say, are these mashed potatoes?"

"A little more, please."

"Um — if there's anything I love it's creamed onions."

"Ice cream for dessert."

"No?"

"Fact — coffee ice cream."

"Say, was that a tomato soup, eh?"

"Think of a week of this!"

"Pass my plate."

"Let's begin all over again."

"Hope you stay with us, Shad."

"Shut up," said Shad, "and be a gentleman with those onions!"

They slept late, had breakfast in bed and rose just in time to drop in to lunch.

"Why, where's the Shad?" said Turkey Reiter.

"He's gone."

"Fired!"

"Thrown out!"

"Hurray!"

They took their knives and forks and beat a gleeful tattoo on the table, then burst into peals of laughter.

"This is where we score."

"Oh, mamma, what a story to tell on the Shad!"

"Will we tell it?"

"Oh, no!"

"Are we it?"

They rose and shook hands, then sat down and looked at one another critically.

"Say, where's the little pink rash?"

"Search me."

"I haven't got it."

"Nor me."

"It ought to have come," said the Egghead thoughtfully.

"I feel bum enough to have a dozen, all right."

"Shut up!" said the Egghead, jumping up so as to catch the first view, "here comes lunch!"

"What is it?"

"Veal cutlet."

"With brown sauce?"

"Brown sauce — fresh peas and tomatoes!"

"Say, sports," said Turkey Reiter suddenly, "is this cutlet tough to you?"

"It certainly is."

"It cuts all right."

"Well, it hurts me to chew it."

The Egghead laid down his knife and fork with a clatter.

"Why, Egghead, what's wrong?"

"Do your jaws ache?"

"Sure!"

"They do."

"Have you ever had the mumps?"

"No!" cried in horror Turkey, the Gutter Pup and Lovely Mead.

"Well, you have them!"

. . . . . .

They not only had the mumps, but they had them violently, outrageously, swollen to ridiculous proportions. On the third day, while the Gutter Pup from his bed was gazing in the opposite mirror at a face that looked like a chipmunk with a cocoanut in either cheek, a word of consolation came to him in the shape of the following scrawl:

Say, Gutter Pup, it was all Macnooder. I didn't know — honest, I didn't. Square me with Turkey.

Yours,

SHAD.

P. S.— I've had the mumps.

CHAPTER V

THE FIRM FINDS A NEW VICTIM

Shortly after the firm of Macnooder and the Tennessee Shad had been established on a dividend basis, they discovered to their alarm that the scope of the future operations was exactly limited by the lustre of their past successes. Not that there was any stop in the output of fertile ideas or astute practical financiering. The trouble was, to use Wall Street phraseology, with the market and the lambs. If Macnooder sought to launch an idea he was greeted with derisive smiles and the cry:

"Fine, tell it to the Tennessee Shad!"

When the Tennessee Shad languidly and artfully proposed, the reply was similar and more insulting:

"Try it on Macnooder, you assassin and bunco steerer!"

Famine set in relentlessly and there is no telling what might have happened had not chance

as shall be related brought them a victim made to order and a field of exploitation which for a time seemed more inexhaustible than the diamond field of Africa. Had either the avarice of Doc Macnooder or the mischievious imagination of the Tennessee Shad been capable of restraint, the firm might have gone the full course in fattening prosperity; but as both were but mortal, the speculation was profitable but unfortunately short. Here endeth the parenthesis.

When Montague Skinner had completed sixteen gentle and luxurious years in the hansoms and continuous vaudevilles of New York City, it chanced that the select private school which he reluctantly graced, becoming unduly elated with the phenomenally triumphant eleven which represented it, issued a challenge and bore down on The Lawrenceville School, Lawrenceville, New Jersey, with a betting commissioner and faces which they desperately strove to render without malice or guile.

As the hospitality of their hosts saw them to the Trenton depot, they reached New York on their return trip tickets and arrived at their homes, delaying the cab-driver no longer than

the time required to borrow the fares from their sympathetic butlers. The Metropolitan papers obligingly concealed the score in obscure corners while the business manager hurriedly revised the schedule for the ensuing season, excusing himself to the Lawrenceville Football Association on the ground that the two hours required to make the trip was unfortunately found to be a serious infringement on the scholarly routine of the school.

The experience was exceedingly upsetting to young Skinner who, being a very large frog in a very small pond, could not remember without profound unrest the very much larger frogs he had seen disporting themselves on the surface of the considerably larger waters.

Now Skinner had not simply been born with a gold spoon in his mouth, but literally amid a shower of golden spoons, forks, and knives. Joshua M. Skinner, proprietor and manager of The Regal Hotel, blissfully regarded himself as but a humble instrument in the advancement of his only child's career, and secretly rejoiced when his son lectured him on the proprieties of masculine attire and the vernacular of select society.

At fifteen, Montague was installed in his private suite and given his particular valet, likewise a coachman and coupé be at his orders all hours of the day. Accounts were opened at the best of tailors and haberdashers, and Joshua M. Skinner doubled an exceedingly elastic allowance, resolved that money should never be lacking to the proper equipment of Montague's genteel sporting proclivities. Mrs. Skinner was all that a fond and perfect mother should be and the only time that the semblance of a disagreement had arisen between her and her son was on one vulgar occasion when she had beheld Montague and three companions returning from school in a *hired* cab.

Despite this tender paternal solicitude, Montague had passed through so much of the disillusionment of wordly existence that he had quickly come to assume that air of complete boredom which goes with a stockade collar and a limply pendant cigarette. He never burst into roars of laughter. The most excruciatingly mirth provoking turns of the vaudeville headliners never stirred him to more than a tolerantly amused smile. He never applauded. At the

age of sixteen he had never fallen in love. He spoke of the chorus as "homes for old women," and from his superior knowledge, smiled down at his more impulsive comrades who, blinded by the flood of lights and a painted cheek, occasionally borrowed from him the price of a timid bouquet. He had never lost his temper, as he was surrounded by those who never quarreled with his choice of The Hotel Regal Special Cigars or the daintily served dinners, and generously left him the choice of the evening's entertainment — and the buying of the seats. He had never been guilty of anything so vulgar as a rough and tumble fight. He had never saved up to purchase something that gave him the thrill of unhoped-for possession. His trousers had never bagged at the knees. His glossy hair was never ruffled and Bucks, the devoted valet, saw to it that his cravats were never allowed to fade upon the constantly renewed shirts of specially imported French lawn.

He was just over the five foot line, very carefully washed, reddish hair well subdued, a slightly raw countenance, perpendicular ears and a short chin which hung on the brink of a

three inch Piccadilly collar. Despite a creaseless coat that ran over the stoop of his shoulders and the distinction of his racing vest, he still had the look of one who had been forced into long trousers by hothouse processes.

On Saturday morning he rose promptly at ten, extended his unmuscular arms to Bucks who solicitously encased them in his wadded wrapper and opened the door to the already prepared bath.

By half past eleven he went out on the avenue dragging a bamboo cane, for a visit to his shirtmakers whose obsequious attention gave him a little lukewarm satisfaction. Later he met his cronies at an expensive restaurant where the head waiter in person placed him in his chair with a deferential, "What can I do for you today, Mr. Skinner?"

Sometimes he ordered from his profound and nice knowledge of how such delectable repasts should be ordered and sometimes he said in a bored way:

"Just shake us up something tasty, will you?"

Then he initialed the bill without looking at it, to the sidelong admiration of his guests.

In the evening, if the matinee had been too fatiguing, they ensconced themselves in Montague's private salon and sat into the early hours about a green table laden with different colored chips of the sort that on other tables are used in a sport entitled tiddle-de-winks.

And yet because way down beneath all the sham and superficiality with which doting parents were trying to smother the real impulses; because the spark of the boy is invincible and cannot be completely extinguished, young Skinner began to wonder and to dream. He saw again, beyond the heavy, crowded, towering buildings the glimpse of a strange life than ran joyously over green fields and around ivy-clad houses of brick and tile, a life where the boy and the man were strangely joined, where the world was the world of that youth of which he had known nothing and towards which he began strangely to yearn.

And so it happened to the amazement of his precious cronies, of Bucks the flabber-gasted valet, of Skinner's father and mother, and most of all to himself, that at the beginning of his seventeenth year, in the month of September, Montague Skinner of Broadway and Fifth

Avenue, renounced the metropolis and took his way towards the Lawrenceville School in Lawrenceville, New Jersey.

Doc Macnooder, perched like a sentinel hawk, sat in the open window of the Triumphant Egghead's room surveying the arrival of the appetizing freshmen. His legs hung out, his heels rapped an occasional tattoo around the clinging ivy, but his glance was distant and circling upward in the speculative heights of financial dreams.

Across the way, from Dick Stover's room in the turret of the Dickinson, the thin shanks of the Tennessee Shad protruded in a similar attitude. From time to time their carnivorous glances sought the front porches below them and fastened intently on the stir of an incoming freshman.

About the long green reaches of the Circle, the last stages were discharging their vociferous or bashful occupants — a last belated buggy was streaking towards the distant Cleve, ventre-à-terre. Below on the stone steps the committee on introduction was catechizing a rumpled can-

didate who clasped a valise to him with a despairing loneliness.

"Oh you Macnooder man!"

Macnooder, screening his eyes, discovered under the pendant legs of the Tennessee Shad the wolfish eyes and star-pointing nose of Dennis de Brian de Boru Finnegan.

The call was repeated.

"Hello yourself," said Macnooder.

"What luck?"

"What luck over there?" said Macnooder who from theory always reserved the last word.

"Gilt edged, premium down, bang up — strictly fresh and all that sort of thing," said Finnegan, who (as has been related) considered himself the discoverer of the double adjective.

"What have you got?"

"Two brutal sluggerinos who played professional feet-ball in the slums of Chicago."

Macnooder received this with a languid yawn.

"The champion peroxide blond half-back of Des Moines, Iowa."

"How interesting!"

"A millionaire baby from Philadelphia

wrapped up in greenbacks, and Cyclops Berbecker, the one-eyed wonder of the wandering eye."

"Fact?" said Macnooder, the impresario at once keenly alert and addressing the Tennessee Shad, the senior partner of the firm of Macnooder and Self.

"Fact," said the Shad solemnly, "glass eye, detachable and most sociable."

Macnooder's glance was a glance of envy. Seeing which Finnegan chirped up —

"Well, old pawnbroker, what have you got to boast of?"

"Nothing," said Macnooder sadly. "Supplies very poor this year, boys."

At this moment back of him burst forth a chorus of exclamations.

"Keeroogalum!"

"Holy Cats!"

"What is it?"

"Hold me up!"

"Have I lived to see it!"

Below, two suburbanally distinguished horses, drawing Trenton's proudest hackney coach, had stopped and from the front seat a being, ob-

sequious and mechanical, had sprung to his heels, touched his hat and waited at attention.

"Hush!" said the Triumphant Egghead, "don't frighten it, it'll fly away."

"It's a beadle," said Turkey Reiter.

"It's a dentist."

"It's a butler."

"A butler your grandmother — it's a valet."

"My word!"

"So it is."

"A real live young valet."

"What's he going to do now?"

"Hush!"

Bucks, in obedience to a command, came towards the steps, perceived Macnooder suspended from the sill, like a wooden monkey on a stick, and bringing his heels to attention, touched his finger to his hat and said:

"Beg pardon, sir, but is this the Dickinson House?"

Macnooder put his hand to his throat, gulped and nodded, incapable of speech. The silence everywhere had fallen like the crash of thunder. Even Dennis de Brian de Boru Finnegan was

clinging to the window frame awed and speechless.

Bucks returning, imparted the reassuring information, the door opened, and Montague Skinner emerged, supporting his languid body on a light bamboo cane, slapping the annoying dust from his beautiful trousers, and, leaving the vulgarities of the baggage to Bucks, sauntered not too eagerly and in no wise embarrassed, up the stone flags to the house.

Upstairs, the pent up indignation burst forth with a roar.

"Murder!"

"Desecration!"

"Outrage!"

"Lynch him!"

"Pie him!"

"Strip the hide off him!"

"Mangle him!"

The door resounded with the impact of furious bodies.

"Stop!"

The voice was the voice of Macnooder, the master mind. The mob paused in suspense.

"Come back — sit down!"

"Sit down?" thundered the Triumphant Egghead. "Sit down! When we're disgraced — laughing stock of the campus — sit down?"

"Exactly. Would you kill the goose that lays the golden egg, you nincompoop!"

A light began to dawn. The Triumphant Egghead scratched one ear, loosened his collar and collapsed in a chair.

"What this house needs is style," said Macnooder firmly "style and proper banking facilities."

"Aha!"

"When a young Van Astorbilt arrives, you'd make a noise, would you, and frighten him away."

At this moment Hungry Smeed at the window announced shrilly:

"The valet, the valet, he's driving away!"

"Let him go," said Macnooder with great calm.

"I say," said Butcher Stevens wrathfully, "are you going to let a fashion plate, a candy dude, insult us in this way and do nothing about it?"

"Butcher, you're so crude," said Macnooder

crushingly, sitting down and gazing out of the window with the eye of a cat who knows what is waiting on the sill. "Just think,— this belongs to us,— all to us!"

The Great Big Man came scooting through the door, his little knickerbockered legs shaking with excitement.

"His name is Skinner and his father owns The Regal Hotel, New York City."

"Wire at once to reserve the bridal suite," said Macnooder triumphantly. "Where's Klondike?"

A moment latter Klondike, the Ethiopian who was advertised to shake up the beds of the Dickinson, was found and brought in grinning, while the mystified veterans gazed at Macnooder expectantly.

"No, he doesn't look like a valet," said Macnooder sadly. "Not at all like a valet."

"But we can dress him up," exclaimed Turkey Reiter, the first to seize the idea.

Ten minutes later, Klondike encased in a battered stovepipe, supplied with white mittens and a selected pigeon's blood cravat received on a salver a dozen calling cards which he was in-

structed to present one at a time, and departed in search of Montague Skinner after the stovepipe had been decorated with a chicken feather in lieu of a cockade.

"Remember," said Macnooder imperiously before the gathering dispersed, "nothing brutal, nothing coarse, we must do nothing to discourage capital, we must be kind to Van Astorbilt, we must educate him — gently, for he belongs to us — all of us!"

Skinner's first days were replete with disturbing surprises. He, the big frog, had sunk with a splash, dwindled into a very small tadpole among a myriad of other little tadpoles.

Of course he had expected a certain amount of ragging. When Klondike, in his circus paraphernalia had appeared with the calling cards, he had recognized the patness of the caricature. Still, this had surprised him. He had never thought of the incongruity of arriving with a valet, nor that it would be an isolated phenomenon. It was rather upsetting to find himself in a world where valets failed to impress.

Another thing that rather puzzled him was the

studied attitude of deference assumed toward him by the Dickinson House. He was not always quite sure of this attitude. At times it seemed to him that a lip twitched or that a roguish gleam lurked in eyes that were set for gravity.

Now, of course, this was all rather ridiculous, for they were nothing but children, whereas he — he had lived. He had known things beyond their ken, had lived the life of a man of fashion, a cosmopolite, and of course if they found his costumes rather individual, equally of course he could not be expected to descend to jerseys and corduroy "pants."

He had had quite an interesting experience with that minor detail of scholastic life — the curriculum. He had hesitated a long while in deliberation over the requirements for admission into the Fifth Form and then modestly decided to lengthen his sojourn amid pleasant places. The day following his arrival he spent an annoying morning and afternoon being examined for the Fourth. The following morning he was assigned to the Third, where his recitations commanded such solicitous interest from the Natural

Enemy that he agreed to descend another rung on the ladder. There he remained long enough to become pleasantly acquainted and wearily acquiesced in his final drop into the First Form, where all travel ceases.

Luckily, he did not regard the curriculum seriously. One thing, though, annoyed him. He had passed through the fire of baptism and had been renamed the Uncooked Beefsteak. Whether this was a tribute to himself as a product of the Regal Hotel or whether it was an attempt to express felicitously the red hair and singularly raw hue of his complexion, the fact remained that he, Montague Skinner, cosmopolite, was publicly known as the Uncooked Beefsteak. The worst of it was that he could not see the humor of it, it hurt his pride that he of all men, before whom head waiters and haberdashers bowed down, should be so misunderstood.

Now there are only two ways to treat a nickname; either to grin and hope for some future coincidence that will substitute a more acceptable name, or to place a chip on your shoulder and announce publicly in the fashion of Sow

Emmons and Vulture Watkins that any use of the abhorred name will have to be accomplished by an exhibition of the manly art.

The first alternative was beyond the knowledge of Montague Skinner and the second was brutal and mussing.

He fell back on his knowledge of the weaknesses of human nature. He would do what he had always done — open the pocketbook and win by Roman display.

Doc Macnooder roomed across the hall in that secret place into which few were allowed to penetrate. Montague liked the ubiquitous Macnooder. He was so natural and friendly and he showed him the deference that proved that Macnooder at least realized the difference between a tumbling cub and a man of experience. About this time the distinction of Macnooder's cravats became a matter of public comment; likewise a variegated vest that materially added to the charm of his personal appearance.

One afternoon as the Uncooked Beefsteak was sitting forlornly on his window seat, there came a knock and the round, guileless face of Doc Macnooder beamed through the doorway.

"Ah there, old Sporting Life," said Macnooder in a sympathetic way, "feeling pretty chipper?"

"Fine," said the Uncooked Beefsteak with a painful smile.

"Food's better in Little Old New York, isn't it?" said Macnooder, his eye roving among the gay cravats that hung from the bureau corner. Skinner sighed; a famished gluttonous sigh.

"I'd like to take you out for a little snap or two at some places I know of," he said regaining his worldly air.

"Caviar and asparagus?"

"*A vol-au-vent* with a cold salmon trout first."

"And a real *beefsteak,*" said Macnooder, opening a bureau drawer hungrily.

Montague shrank back, glancing at Macnooder suspiciously.

"I say, Doc."

"Hello!"

"I wish you fellows wouldn't call me the Uncooked Beefsteak."

"Why, that's a stunning nickname."

"Well, I wish you wouldn't."

"Does it worry you?"

"It does."

"All right, Beefsteak, I'll try not to."

Montague bit his lip but Macnooder's face showed only the zest of the explorer.

"I don't see any," said Macnooder after a minute.

"Any what?"

"Any filthy weeds."

Montague, slipping to the door, shot the key and proceeding to his trunk brought forth a long, low box decorated with custom stamps and foreign gilt.

"This is what I smoke," he said carelessly, extending the box.

Macnooder's glance trembled in spite of himself.

"Black as ink and half a mile long. Fifty Centers?"

"They're private stock," said Montague in a bored way. "Take one if you like."

"Not now," said Macnooder, with visions of bigger game as he sat and watched with wolfish eyes Skinner return the box under lock and key.

"Gee, Beefsteak, pardon me, Montague old chap, you certainly are a dead game one."

"Oh, I've knocked about a bit," said Skinner, stretching his arms languidly.

"I say you really are a devil of a fellow," said Brer Rabbit with his imagination centering on the miraculous cigars. "There are a couple of champion smokers around these modest little diggin's but my aunt's cat's pants! I believe you could smoke them to a finish."

"Champion smokers!" said Skinner pricking up his ears.

"Oh, we pull off a couple of smoking championships a year," said Macnooder, stooping to tighten his shoe-laces, "secret Ku-Klux-Klan, dead of midnight affairs."

"That interests me," said Skinner, approaching.

"They're great old pow-wows," said Macnooder, skillfully dropping the subject. "Got any grub?"

"We might wander over to the village," said Skinner, now intensely alert.

"Why not?"

"I say Doc," said Skinner as they shuffled over to Laloo's Hot Dog Palace, "when do they hold these championships?"

"Championships?" said Macnooder, pretending ignorance.

"Smoking championships."

"One's due now."

"I'd like to get into that, you know."

"Hm, rather difficult. They're quite select — the Tennessee Shad — old fellows — inner gang — crême de la crême and all that."

"Oh," said Skinner in great disappointment, "couldn't you work me in?"

"Hardly."

"I'd like a go at it."

"Let me think," said Macnooder whose fertile brain had already achieved daylight.

With the object of stimulating a favorable mental process, Skinner not only ordered up a pack of steaming Frankfurters but forced down two indigestibles himself.

"Well, have you thought up anything?" he said anxiously, after they had consumed a jelly roll and steered for Appleby's, the second station on the road from the Aching Void.

"I'm thinking hard," said Macnooder, who gave the high signal to Appleby and soon was floundering among the pastries.

Skinner, to be democratic, after considerable epicurean hesitation, chose a Turkish Paste as the least of many evils and nibbled a little on the edge.

"Beefsteak," said Macnooder, in a friendly way as Skinner paid up, "you're really quite the bounding boy. Really now,— we'll just cool off at the Jigger Shop,— really now, you ought to get into the swim here."

"That's just what I want to do," said Skinner a little too eagerly. "I'd like to know the real crowd you know."

"I see, sort of break into high society," said Macnooder, who bit his tongue to keep from choking.

"Well," said the Uncooked Beefsteak, blushing a little.

"Oh, that's all right — perfectly proper — just a little expression of mine. Besides you belong — you're it — you're the real thing — you're a sport, you know."

"I say, have you been thinking up a scheme?" said Skinner, not only anxious but a little suspicious of Macnooder's admiration.

"I have a glimmer," said Macnooder, nodding

to Al, the guardian of the Jigger and elevating three fingers as a signal for the maximum, "yes, I may say a twinkle. I wish the Tennessee Shad were around. Try half a dozen eclairs, you old gormandizer. Shut your eyes and imagine you're denting the menu at dear old Del's. No? Well, thinking it over, I think I will. Al, transport the eclairs."

"You said a twinkle," said Skinner patiently figuring out Macnooder's greatest possible cubic capacity.

"Exactly that," said Macnooder, who continued to assist his stomach to stimulate his mind.

"Well, what have you hit upon?" said Skinner, expectantly.

"A good one," said Macnooder, leaving with one hand upon the belt and a lingering backward glance.

"Let's go back to the room and talk it over."

"Never!" said Doc in alarm, "we might be overheard — we'll just roll up to Conover's and get a quiet corner, and eat a few pancakes while we're discussing the details."

"I'm not hungry," said Skinner defensively.

"That's all right," said Macnooder cheerfully. "I am."

"You think you can work me in, then," said Skinner, after waiting for Doc to open the subject.

"Not in the championships," said Doc. "You have to be elected to the Sporting Club and all that — most select. I have another way, though, but it's expensive. You get the word — expensive."

Skinner handed Mrs. Conover a ten dollar gold certificate.

"You reassure me," said Doc with a summery smile.

Skinner had a sudden feeling of uneasiness.

"We were speaking of breaking into society," said Macnooder. "That's the idea."

"How so?" said the Uncooked Beefsteak, looking decidedly raw.

"You give a banquet — an introductory banquet — a sort of débutante affair, you know."

"How could it be pulled off?" said the Beefsteak, caressing the idea.

"Terrific secrecy, dead of midnight, banks of the canal, and all that."

"But the smoking championship?"

"Aha!" said Macnooder, looking very subtle, "that's where the real idea comes in. For the entertainment of your guests you give an invitation smoking meet."

"I see," said Skinner joyfully.

"And put up as first prize a nice long fat juicy box of *expensive* cigars."

"But suppose I win?"

"You won't."

"Oh, I don't know."

"Well, are you fond of my idea?" said Macnooder proudly.

"I am," said Skinner, resting his hand on Doc's shoulder as a mark of special favor. "But I say, how do you work a smoking championship?"

"Leave that to me."

"Who'll I invite?"

"Likewise to me. I'm the little social secretary."

"What'll I get?"

"Caviar," said Doc firmly.

"Something in the line of patés?"

"Truffled pheasants and all that sort of thing."

"A lot of sweets."

"But no *beefsteaks*," said Macnooder who departed hastily to roll off his laughter on the soft lawn behind the Kennedy, where he and the Tennessee Shad sat long in gleeful consultation.

Skinner was complacently elated at the new prospect. After all, big schools were very much like small ones and the way into high society lay clear whatever the geography. The more he thought over Macnooder's scheme, the more it appealed to him. He had no vulgar envy in his nature. He did not aspire to be a hero — all he asked was to be the patron of heroes.

Full of confident expectations, he wrote a letter to Bucks, the marooned valet, outlining a program of Lucullan prodigality. After Doc Macnooder had dropped in for a few words of suggestion, two large boxes stuffed with the Hotel Regal's transported best duly arrived and were placed in safe keeping.

Finally, the great social night arriving, Skinner received the first real thrill of his misdirected little existence — the thrill of forbidden fruit. At ten o'clock the shivering Beefsteak, completely dressed, beheld a thin roving

bar of light trickling under the crack of his door. The next moment, Doc Macnooder preceded by a bullseye lantern stole noiselessly into the darkness.

"Who's that?" said the Uncooked Beefsteak in a chilly whisper.

"Hush," said Macnooder hoarsely, "not a breath!"

"What's that for?" said the Beefsteak, alarmed at the sight of a black cloth that shrouded the mysterious face, burglar fashion.

"We must never be recognized!"

"Is there any danger?"

"Heaps. Old Greek-roots sleeps on a trigger. Put on this handkerchief. Get off those shoes. All ready now?"

"I say, what'll we do if he nabs us?"

"Soak him on the point of the chin," said Macnooder very solemnly. "If you miss him, I'll get him and then scud for your room. Come on now, on your tiptoes."

Guided by Macnooder, the now thoroughly alarmed Beefsteak slipped along the horribly proclaiming halls and through Hungry Smeed's window out into the steaming night.

"Gee!" said Montague, using that vulgar exclamation for the first time, "Gee, that was great!"

"First time?"

"You bet."

"Danger's not over yet. What's that? Down on your pantry!"

"Someone's moving towards us."

"Grab my hand. Come on now. Run for your life."

Guided by Macnooder, stumbling and swaying, Skinner felt the soft turf rush under him. They dodged between the chapel and the accursed abode of Compulsory Bath, skirted the baseball diamonds, and stopped to draw breath behind the safe confines of the laundry.

"Narrow squeak."

"Great," said the palpitating Beefsteak.

They passed through negro settlements, dimly emerging in the suffused light of the approaching moon, rattling their sticks along picket fences to the indignation of furious dogs that came bounding after them, while from ahead came faint echoes of other parties similarly engaged. Gradually their group was augmented

until as they reached the banks of the canal they mustered a dozen in free marching order. Another dozen under the leadership of the Tennessee Shad were splashing in the none-too-fragrant waters or drying their ghostly limbs ashore. Answering shouts went up.

"Here we are."

"Where's the grub?"

"Oh, Turkey Reiter!"

"Hello there, Butcher Stevens!"

"Have you got Van Astorbilt?"

"You bet we have."

"Open the boxes."

"Give us the grub."

"Am I hungry?"

"Oh, no!"

The strange zest of adventure disappeared in Skinner. He was again in his element, he the purveyor of banquets and the patron of heroes. The swimmers came in dripping, hastily scrambling for places in the festive ring.

At this moment there was a disturbance near the provender, and Finnegan came rushing up to Macnooder.

"I say, Doc! Here is the Coffee Colored An-

gel who's sneaked up on us and wants a share of the swag."

"Throw him out!"

"He says he is on to the game, and will give the whole shooting match away. What's to be done?"

"Welcome him with open arms," said Macnooder, who had the instincts of the politician, "and kick the slats out of him to-morrow."

"Start her up!" cried a score of voices.

"Give us the truffles!"

"Trot out your venison!"

"Little girls and little boys," said Macnooder, who loved to speak, but was seldom allowed to finish, "when the evening star, swimming across the sun-kissed horizon —"

"Cut it out!"

"No elocution!"

"Come down to earth!"

"My friends," said Macnooder, complacently yielding, "before opening this evening's entertainment, I would draw your attention to a few articles of daily necessity which I am prepared to furnish at prices —"

"No business!"

"You can't flim-flam us to-night."

"Come to the point."

"Gentlemen," said Macnooder, looking about him doubtfully, "you forget. Where are your manners? Remember this is a débutante affair. Gentlemen, I have the honor to socially introduce to you Mr. Montague Skinner, the Fifth Avenue Narcissus, one of the leaders of the crême de la crême of Metropolitan fashion. Mr. Skinner's perfect pants are the feature of the famous annual poultry exhibition. Mr. Skinner's socks are the limit — of gentility. Mr. Skinner's neckties are destined to revolutionize local styles."

"You ought to know, Doc!" said a voice.

"I do know," said Macnooder, with an evil look into the crowd, "and I know likewise the skulking author of that aspersion. I resume. Mr. Montague Skinner in making his début into the crême de la crême of Lawrenceville society comes before you, not simply as the spoiled favorite of the lobster palaces, but as an athlete!"

"A what?" cried a dozen mystified voices.

"I said athlete," said Macnooder. "Mr.

Montague Skinner is the holder of all Metropolitan junior smoking records, from the one-minute cigarette dash to the one-hour record on cigars. As a preliminary to the opening of the evening's banquet, Mr. Skinner will meet in friendly competition the leather-lunged champions of the school. In order to add a little sportiness to the evening, as well as to soften the edge of his munificence, Mr. Skinner will supply each guest with three cigars. You start on a crouching start, and the first to finish, the first at the grub. Two prizes will be offered — one open to all present for the first to finish these same diamond-backed goldplated cigars; the second for the contest of champions."

"What's that?'

"It will be a finish fight — no quarter asked or given! Each contestant has nominated his particular brand of leather. There are five Would-Bes. There will be five distinctly different poisonous rounds. In deference to our host, the first round will be at cigars known as the Pride of the Regal Hotel; second round at corncob pipes specially loaded; third round at stogies; fourth round at political cigars, and

fifth round at a final death-defying test proposed by Butcher Stevens — the terrible Hubble-Bubble — the Hookah or Persian Water Pipe!"

"Supposin' they live through it!" said a voice.

"They won't," said Macnooder. "But if they do, a new series will begin at once until a decisive knock-out shall be scored."

"A regular ten-second knock-out?"

"Each contestant as he drops by the wayside will be allowed one hour and twenty minutes to recover and then a doctor will be summoned."

"What doctor?"

"Doctor Macnooder."

"I resign," cried a dozen voices.

Macnooder, whose soul was above mosquito bites, continued:

"The Hon. Rinky Dink Stover, Tough McCarthy, the champion gum chewer of the Woodhull; Mr. Dennis de Brian de Boru Finnegan, our little silent boy, and the Tennessee Shad, the Apollo Belvedere of the Blue Ridges, have unselfishly agreed to serve as judges, spongers, and ambulance corps."

"Cheese it!" said the voice of the rebel.

"Why don't they smoke up?" cried another.

"Mr. Stover and Mr. McCarthy," said Macnooder suavely, "as far as can be discovered, are bound by a secret oath never again to touch tobacco. Mr. Finnegan is desisting in the hope of ultimately reaching five feet, and the Tennessee Shad refrains from fear of scorching his bones."

"Gee, Doc, but you are a peach!" said the voice of one who was still cramped by the facts.

"Any more questions?"

There were none.

"I will now introduce to you Mr. Montague Skinner, the pet of the lobster palaces and the Prince of Wales of New Jersey fashions."

As Skinner rose to bow his blushing acknowledgments, Macnooder with a wave of his hand transferred the box of cigars to the Tennessee Shad, who emerged from the shadows and proceeded to distribute. Just what took place in that shadow is locked in the secret archives of the firm of Macnooder and the Tennessee Shad, but the answer might explain much that proceeded to happen.

Quite deceived by the vociferousness of the false applause that greeted him, Skinner felt again the pleasant tickling sensations that recalled the prodigal days of the metropolis. He withdrew with all the old gorgeousness to join the group of champions. The risen moon flung leafy shadows over the half-naked circle of contestants, where each novice was resolved to die a martyr's death rather than miss the opportunity of smoking a genuine one-dollar cigar. At a command from Macnooder, the matches crackled into flames like the points of distant picket fires, accompanied at once by a gradually increasing chorus of coughs and choking. Still not a descendant of Eve, lover of the forbidden, flinched at his awful task.

"I will now present the champions of champions," said Macnooder in cadence. "Mr. Montague Skinner, the conqueror of the Rockfellerite, the cigar that the Czar of Russia calls for with his morning coffee, you have just had presented to you. The second contestant is Mr. Butcher Stevens, who smokes the terrible Hubble-Bubble as a baby swallows a hatpin. Mr. Stevens is absolutely confident of success."

Butcher Stevens arose amidst applause and performed a bow by means of a scraping motion of his left foot.

"The third contestant is Mr. Slush Randolph, known as the White Terror, or King of the Cigarette Fiends. Mr. Randolph takes great pride in his yellow-tipped fingers, which he waggishly calls his Meerschaums. Mr. Randolph is absolutely confident of sucess."

Slush Randolph smiled a sickly smile and tumbled backward to a place beside Butcher Stevens.

"Our fourth contestant," continued Macnooder, "is Mr. Stubbs, the White Mountain Canary. Mr. Stubb's speeches for the Democratic ticket not only defeated Mr. Bryan but wrecked his party. Mr. Stubbs bases his hopes for victory on the training he received in smoking political cigars, five of which, the gift of a Prohibitionist candidate for dog catcher, he is confident no man can smoke and live to tell the tale. The White Mountain Canary is absolutely confident of success."

Stubbs, who had listened to this biography in awe-struck amazement, gasped and sat down,

still keeping a fascinated glance on the orator of the evening.

"The fifth and last contestant," continued Macnooder, "is Gomez, the Black Beauty, the Dark Horse from Cuba. Beauty, although a freshman just arrived, has a reputation second to none. In Cuba it is said he smoked his first cigar at the age of three years and two months. He is absolutely confident of success."

As the fifth contestant awkwardly slouched forward and bobbed his head, a suppressed murmur ran the rounds of the burning circle, while Tough McCarthy and Dink Stover were seen to bend warningly over the form of the Coffee Colored Angel, who had been making remarks.

"First Round, on Mr. Montague Skinner's suggestion, at the Rockfellerite coupon-bearing cigar. Ready! Go! All other contestants are reminded that three cigars must be finished before denting the grub, the sooner the finish, the more the grub! Smoke up, you Gormandizers!"

Skinner drew in his first puff with complacency, assuming a position of ease and dignity against a tree. He studied his rivals, discount-

ing at once Slush Randolph and the White Mountain Canary, who already were smoking lip-deep, but considering uneasily the professional precision of Butcher Stevens and the Black Beauty.

He finished his favorite cigar with a slight but noticeable feeling of heaviness, due, no doubt, to the distance from the last feeding hour. Butcher and Black Beauty were already waiting, having ended together. The White Mountain Canary was permitted to continue after a slight altercation with the judges as to the amount consumed, while the White Terror, coughing through the last heated puffs, unbuckled his belt and removed his upper garments with gladiatorial resolution.

"Round Two, contribution of Mr. Slush Randolph, corncob pipes with Mr. Randolph's special mixture, known as The Blacksmith's Delight."

Skinner received his pipe with less elation. The first puff made him glance up sharply, half suspecting a practical joke. To his surprise the White Mountain Canary, albeit with an expression of pain, was resolutely at work, while the

White Terror's face showed an expression of malignant ecstasy.

At the conclusion of Round Two the honors were plainly with the Black Beauty, who had drawn slightly ahead of Butcher Stevens, while a considerable interval separated Skinner and Slush Randolph from the White Mountain Canary.

"Round Three," said the cold, unfeeling voice of Doc Macnooder; "political cigars, name unknown, at suggestion of the White Mountain Canary."

The cigar was worse than the pipe. A slight haze began to rock slowly down from the overhanging boughs. In desperation Skinner tried quick, short puffs, expelled as soon as taken, but at that he began to cough uneasily. The outer circle of contestants had disappeared from his consciousness, he saw only his little area, the tense faces of Slush and Stubbs, the determined jaws of Stevens, and the indolent figure of the Black Beauty, who, as regular as a teakettle, was enjoying every puff.

At Round Four, Slush Randolph had crawled away and the White Mountain Canary lay on

his back with one leg elevated in token of the surrender he was unable to utter.

"Round Four," said the joyful voice, "resignations of the White Mountain Canary and Slush, the King of the Cigarette Fiends, received and accepted. Still resolved on asphyxiation, Butcher Stevens, Montague Skinner, and the Black Beauty. Round Four, suggested by the Dark Horse from Cuba, will be at the famous Seaman's Stogy, a charming little thing used either as a pastime or to lash the tiller. Are you ready? Go!"

Butcher Stevens took two short, jerky puffs, glanced very hard at Macnooder, and immediately threw up the sponge. The sight brought no feeling of joy to Skinner — he had tried the Stogy, with a pain like an electric needle shooting through his lungs. Still he would not give in. He would show them that courage was a relative thing, that they could fail where he could rise superior. His head rocked and weird forms danced before his eyes, but still he kept on. Suddenly he looked about him. Of the dozen who had started in the common race, not one was left upright. He had the feeling of a

conqueror on the battlefield of his own defeat. Muttered curses and objurgations seemed to buzz about him in indistinct gasps. He heard them not at all. His flickering energies were concentrated on keeping alive the red spark at the end of the thing that burned like a wet rope coated with tar.

Halfway through, the haze cleared, and he suddenly perceived the Black Beauty deliciously on his back, legs crossed, expelling huge volumes of smoke, INHALING every breath! At this sight all resolution oozed from him. He tried one last discouraged pull, then allowed the reeking weed to slip from his limp fist, and digging his fingers in the warm turf, desperately strove to steady the careening world.

Once only he opened his dizzy eyes — at the sound of a clattering plate. In the middle of the circle, laughing ghoulishly, Macnooder the traitor, Stover, McCarthy, Finnegan, and the Tennessee Shad were literally stuffing themselves with the banquet that was to have fed the score, that now lay in groaning groups vowing vengeance on him, Skinner, who had sought only popularity.

In this one horrid glance he had a vision of the Black Beauty, who, disdaining food, still gloriously on his back, was burning up the delicious cigars with the rapidity of a prairie fire.

"I hear you had a party," said Al, watchdog of the Jigger, when the next morning Skinner had stolen over during forbidden hours.

"They tell me I did," said Skinner, weakly ordering a bromo-seltzer.

"I hear quite a few young bruisers are laying for you."

"I am not very popular," said the Uncooked Beefsteak slowly, reflecting with a new enlightenment how ungrateful republics may be.

"I suppose you know how Macnooder and the Tennessee Shad flim-flammed you," said Al, who harbored a little professional jealousy.

"No."

"Worked in a lot of doped cigars and cornered the grub."

"I don't care," said Skinner, to whom even French cooking would never mean anything again.

"They tell me, though, you are pretty good at the weed," said Al, to console him.

"I thought I was till I struck that fellow Black Beauty."

"Who?"

"The fellow from Cuba — Gomez," said the Uncooked Beefsteak with reluctant admiration.

"Huh — there goes your Gomez now,' said Al with a short, barking laugh.

"Why, that's Blinky!" said Skinner, perceiving the one-eyed purveyor of illicit Sunday papers slouching across the street.

"Sure," said Al, looking pityingly at the young innocent. "Macnooder worked him in to take no chances. Blinky could set fire to a rubber hose and smoke it with ease and pleasure."

CHAPTER VI

A SLIGHT DISPUTE IN THE FIRM

If the smoking championship had blighted Montague Skinner's young and tender illusions it had also its sting for its promoters. The immediate consequence was an abrupt and violent rupture in the firm of youthful promoters on the following abstruse point of moral and financial etiquette.

When the final division had been made of cigars, slightly damaged sandwiches, mixed meat pastes, half-filled bottles of root beer and ginger ale, uneaten eclairs and French pastry turning slightly to the sour, and the same had either been forced into the Aching Void or sold to rank outsiders for cash considerations, the Tennessee Shad discovered by accident that Macnooder had actually collected from Blinky and each of the challenging smokers the sum of twenty-five cents for the privilege of smoking the miraculous cigars. The Tennessee Shad demanded an equitable accounting of all sums

gained from whatever source. Macnooder refused, claiming certain perquisites as financier and underwriter and on this point an instant estrangement took place.

The Tennessee Shad nursing the bitterness a creative genius feels for the pettinesses of a commercial partner, was curled up on the window seat of his high station at the Kennedy, when a sudden outburst of shrieks sounded opposite.

"Beefsteak, this way!"

"Come on, you son of the Regal Hotel!"

"Beefsteak, clean my shoes!"

"Beefsteak, shake up this coat!"

"Beefsteak, tidy up my room!"

"Shake a leg!"

"On the jump!"

"Oh, you Beefsteak!"

The Tennessee Shad uncoiled as a snake uncoils, and lifting his head listened curiously to the insistent chorus that was borne to him from the open windows of the Dickinson opposite. From time to time the frantic figure of Montague Skinner could be seen rushing through the rooms in a confused attempt to serve many masters.

"A SPEEDY VALET SERVICE THEY HAVE ORGANIZED OVER THERE"

"That's quite a speedy valet service they've organized over there," said the Gutter Pup enviously.

"It's a mistake," said the Tennessee Shad in lazy disapproval.

"How so?"

"The Beefsteak won't stand it. He'll run away — ship before the mast and all that sort of thing. They're overdoing it."

"Well, can you blame the crowd?" said the Gutter Pup, thinking of the smoking fiasco. "Why, I can taste those cigars yet."

As this was a delicate subject and the Shad was quite aware that his own motives were under the gravest suspicion, he turned the conversation with a yawn.

"All the same I'd like to swipe that young gold mine for one little week," he remarked.

The expression was casual and without malice, but no sooner uttered than it became a moving idea. Unseen by the Gutter Pup, the Tennessee Shad experienced almost a physical shock. His head rose eagerly and his eyes focusing on the noisy Dickinson fixed themselves in a dreamy stare.

"Supposin' I did swipe him?" he said softly to himself.

Now, of course such an act was in direct defiance of all law and precedent, which forbids poaching beyond territorial limits. The Tennessee Shad, however, was one who bequeathed precedents rather than followed them.

With this predatory scheme in mind the Tennessee Shad became keenly alive to the turbulent course of the Uncooked Beefsteak's education in the Dickinson.

Shortly afterwards Skinner, voyaging toward the Jigger Shop, was agreeably surprised to perceive the thin, elongated body of the Tennessee Shad bearing across his path with the most friendly intentions.

"Why, it's the Pet of the Lobster Palaces!" said the Shad, seemingly surprised by the encounter.

Skinner who had had nicknames showered upon him like flowers about a prima donna, accepted the title without demur.

"Going over to the village?" said the Shad cheerily.

"Yes."

"Come on. How are things going?"

"Oh, all right," said the Beefsteak wearily adopting the answer *ae rigueur*.

"Not very chipper, though?"

"Oh, well —"

"The merry little sunshine smile not exactly working, eh?"

"No — o."

They had now come to that short and narrow dash that leads to the Jigger Shop, and the Uncooked Beefsteak, not only seeking sympathy, but willing to buy it, said:

"How about a few jiggers?"

The Tennessee Shad who was always subtle, brushing aside an immediate advantage in order to launch more securely his future maneuvres, replied:

"Thanks, old Hippopotamus, but I'm out for exercise."

Now, had Skinner been anything but a newcomer the monstrosity of this statement would have put him at once on the *qui-vive*. As it was, he was overwhelmed by a stranger sentiment. For the first time since his advent to the school

he had offered and received a refusal. With this unexpected shock all defiance and suspicion died away.

"Who's putting you through the paces?" said the Tennessee Shad, observing the result with satisfaction.

"Why, it's no particular one," said Skinner sadly.

"But Macnooder is the worst!" said the Shad, striving for an advantage.

"Perhaps."

"Pretty strenuous, eh? what?"

Skinner passed his hand over his moist forehead and admitted without qualification the justice of the observation.

"That's the trouble with Macnooder — he's so coarse!"

Skinner, thus artfully encouraged, blurted out:

"I don't mind the rest, but it's the scrubbing-up the shoes, the blacking, that gets my nerves."

"You've got good nerve though," said the Shad, examining critically the stained fingers.

"Oh, I'll stick it out."

"Good boy. Too bad you're not with us."

"I say, how long —" said Skinner, who then balked and stopped.

"How long will you have to be the Merry Little Bootblack?"

"Yes — that's about it."

"Um — m. That depends. Now I'll tell you what to do," said the Tennessee Shad, carefully choosing the best means to prolong the period of servitude that now seemed to promise him such fair returns. "Jolly right up with them!"

"What?" said Skinner amazed.

"Sure. Show you're one of them. Walk right up and swat 'em on the back!"

"No!"

"Jump in and tickle 'em right under the ribs — be playful."

"Playful?"

"That's the game. Start a few jokes at 'em yourself."

"What kind?"

"Crease the trousers the wrong way — a little mucillage in their shoes, camphor balls down the lamp chimney, and all that sort of thing."

"But what'll they do?"

"Do? Why, they'll discharge you for a bum

valet!" said the Tennessee Shad with tears in his eyes.

"By George, I'll try it."

"Do, and say —"

"What?"

"Start on Macnooder."

"Why Macnooder?"

"You see, Doc's got more sense of humor than the rest."

Skinner, longing for company, suggested Conover's and pancakes. The Tennessee Shad refused. On the return Skinner pleaded again the attractions of the Jigger Shop. The Tennessee Shad refused again but it was an awful wrench. They parted, Skinner made gorgeously happy by an invitation to visit the treasure rooms of the Tennessee Shad who dove around a corner to give liberty to his true feelings.

When the Dickinson scouts reported for the fifth successive time that the Uncooked Beefsteak, property and perquisite of the House, had met the Tennessee Shad and led him from one gormandizing result to another, paying all bills, — great was the indignation thereof.

"Look here, boy," said Turkey Reiter to Doc

Macnooder at the hastily summoned council of war, "what are we going to do about it? Supposin' we let up a bit? The Beefsteak isn't so worse, after all."

"There's no use in letting the Tennessee Shad get away with the goods," said the Triumphant Egghead, who also felt defrauded by Skinner's constant excursions with a member of a foreign state.

Now Macnooder had been the chief victim of the Tennessee Shad's artful advice to Skinner, but he had no intention of publishing the fact. Equally he was resolved not to allow the Tennessee Shad to force him to a change of policy.

"The trouble with you cheap sports is your accounts are busted, and you want to be fed," he remarked witheringly.

"Well what of it?" said the Egghead brazenly.

"Don't you see it's all the Tennessee Shad's doings? He's put it into the Beefsteak's head that he can starve us out."

"Of course he has got to be kept in subjection," said Turkey Reiter, "but couldn't we relent a little?"

"Never!" said Vulture Watkins. "The trouble with that New York dude is the moment you treat him decent, he gets unbearable."

"He certainly has been fresh enough lately!"

"Still," said Turkey Reiter, "I don't see why we couldn't relent a little."

"Why should our import trade be deflected," added the Triumphant Egghead. "Skinner belongs to us, doesn't he? Well, then, what right has he to fatten up the Tennessee Shad?"

"In the first place," said Macnooder, raising his voice to quell the mutiny, "the Tennessee Shad won't fatten. In the second place, just sit back and wait. When the Beefsteak really gets to know the Tennessee Shad he'll come limping straight back to us. In the third place, I will have a few fat little words with the Tennessee Shad and tell him what we think of him."

In pursuance of which, choosing his time, Macnooder crossed the path of the Tennessee Shad at the moment when his late partner, having left Skinner, was returning languidly home, well fed and rejoicing.

"Hello," said Macnooder, assuming a critical position.

"Why, it's Macnooder isn't it?" said the Shad blandly. "Have you come to divvy up on that little graft of yours?"

"I've come," said Macnooder wrathfully, "to tell you just what we think of you, you low-down, body-snatching nursery maid!"

"What strong words!"

"See here! What right have you got to interfere with the business of the Dickinson?"

"I, interfere? Gracious goodness! Do you mean little Montague?"

"I do. What right have you got to come poaching over on our grounds?"

"Are you vexed because Beefsteak buys me hot dogs and jiggers and turkish paste and eclairs and root beer and pancakes?" said the Shad smiling, "and lots and lots of other juicy things?"

"Look here, the Beefsteak is fresh as paint. It's up to us to educate him and it's up to you to keep off!"

"Why, hasn't he improved?" said the Shad looking at Macnooder with a malicious eye. "Doesn't he attend to your boots as a real valet should?"

"Will you let him alone?"

"Why don't you be kind and gentle with him? If you're hungry ask him po-litely!"

"Shad, if you weighed a hundred pounds I'd whang the life out of you!"

"Thank you, I weigh just ninety-eight and a half."

"If you weighed a hundred, I'd kick the slats out of you!"

"Don't boast," said the Shad softly. "If I weighed a hundred, you'd settle up with me."

"Then you won't keep off?"

"Alas!"

"Look out!"

"Threats?"

"We'll get you yet!"

"Try."

"Anyhow, you bunco steerer, I'll bet you can't keep him a week!"

"Why, Doc," said the Shad brightening, "that is the first real word of sense you've spoken. But do remember that I'm doing it all because I am so very fond of Montague, and not because I'm trying to even up matters with you. Oh, dear no! Ta! Ta!"

"Just the same," said the Tennessee Shad to himself as he left the infuriated Macnooder. "There's a good deal in what Doc says. I wonder how long I can keep my hands out — really out of that stuffed bank from New York."

Three days later, Dennis de Brian de Boru Finnegan gamboling in, found the Tennessee Shad on the window seat in the reflective attitude of Sherlock Holmes, the character he most admired, mumbling to himself. Finnegan, listening, heard strange muffled words.

"Why not end it all — sooner or later? What's the dif?"

"End what?" said Finnegan, mystified. "What's wrong?"

"It's the Beefsteak," said the Tennessee Shad perceiving him. "Irishman, did you ever try to resist temptation?"

Finnegan sat down and tried to remember.

"I'm resisting — but oh, it hurts!" said the Shad.

"The Beefsteak is some fresh vegetables, isn't he?" said Finnegan understanding.

"It isn't that," said the Shad, "though that is

bad enough. It's the thought of all the green goods he is just itching to buy."

"Why don't you?"

"But then he'll go back to the Dickinson."

"Well, why do you?"

"But if I don't, then Macnooder will."

Finnegan ceased to offer suggestions.

"It's wrong," he said.

"Of course."

"You're interfering in his kindergarten education."

"I know."

"And the Beefsteak has just got to be educated out of those sporting ideas of his."

"Don't I have to listen to them?"

"My advice," said Dennis who was all for discipline, having signally evaded it, "is to wrap up one beautiful gold brick, an eighteen karat smasher, coupon buster, soak it to him and quit the game."

"I am such a creature of habit," said the Tennessee Shad, thinking of the pleasant, refreshing trips to the village.

At this moment from below came a timid hallo.

"Oh, Tennessee Shad!"

Finnegan, hanging over the window sill, perceived below the irresolute figure of the Uncooked Beefsteak and summoned him up. Now Skinner had never yet gathered his courage to the point of a visit to the distinguished room. As it was, he shifted a long moment from foot to foot before daring to enter.

"Look at the Dickinson," said the Tennessee Shad gleefully. "Why, the whole house is boiling up."

Opposite, every window seemed tenanted with indignant spectators.

"Now is your time," said Finnegan hurriedly. "Sell him the whole blooming shooting match."

"No."

"Yes!"

"I mustn't."

"You must."

The door opened gently and Skinner, visibly overcome, stole in on his tiptoes and bumped down into the nearest chair. As Finnegan had calculated, no sooner had this first temperamental weakness passed than Skinner's gaze clearing, fastened in wonder upon the strange collec-

tion of real and bogus trophies which literally choked the walls from floor to ceiling. Each article recalled a chapter in the mercantile progress of the Tennessee Shad and Dink Stover, and some were reminders of youthful gullibility. Notably was this the case in a souvenir toilet set of seven colors which Stover in his salad days had brought from Macnooder with the joy of a Pittsburg millionaire stumbling on an original Rembrandt. With his rise to fame, Stover, turning philosopher, had refused to part with this reminder of past enthusiasm, keeping it prominently displayed as a sort of anchor to common sense when too great a satisfaction with self should tend to raise his feet from the ground.

No sooner did the Beefsteak perceive this variegated assortment of odd china than he sat erect and asked.

"Gee, what's that?"

Dennis, with a triumphant glance at the Tennessee Shad, assumed an auctioneering attitude and rapturously detailed the many imaginary points of interest that could lend value to such a collection.

Propped up on the window-seat, the Tennessee

Shad watched through half closed eyes the responsive eager flush on Skinner's face.

"He would buy it, he would, he certainly would," he said to himself, mastering his emotions with difficulty. "Think of selling it back, right under the nose of Old Macnooder!"

At this moment, as though to add to his trials, Skinner having listened enraptured to Finnegan's recital, exclaimed:

"You don't say so! By jingo, wouldn't I like to have that, though!"

Finnegan yawned, as is customary when a strong emotion is to be concealed, and said in a sort of haphazard way:

"Why, you can always fling out a nice juicy young bid. You never can tell. Perhaps Stover's hard up."

"Really?" said the Uncooked Beefsteak, turning to the joint proprietor.

The Tennessee Shad swallowed hard, glanced out the window to resist temptation, and said almost angrily,

"Not for sale."

"Perhaps Skinner here would like a chance at the football shoes," said Finnegan who at first

believed the Shad was simply working up the scene for a slaughter *en masse*.

"What's that?" said the Beefsteak at once.

"The identical, historic, specially preserved shoes, that Flash Condit wore when he scored on the Princeton Varsity," said Finnegan, who disappeared in quest.

Of course Skinner listened, admired and wanted to buy. The Tennessee Shad again refused, but with difficulty and in a weaker voice. Finnegan scratched his head, sorely vexed, and led the Beefsteak up to the consideration of several articles of fabulous history, including a watch charm supposed (but not guaranteed) to be made of that clapper whose theft had once thrown the school into such a turmoil. The Uncooked Beefsteak admired everything without reserve, coveted everything, and showed extreme willingness to pay spot cash.

The Tennessee Shad, had he been tied to a stake to the accompaniment of twenty howling savages, could have suffered no more. Finally almost overcome, he rose and hastened from the room. Finnegan, quite amazed, followed and last of all, Skinner with the reluctant step of the

THE IDENTICAL SHOES THAT FLASH CONDIT WORE

disappointed collector. Half way down the second flight of stairs the Tennessee Shad could go no further. He turned, leaning against the banisters, facing the Uncooked Beefsteak.

"Say, you don't really want to buy?" he said faintly, hoping against hope that Skinner would return a contrary answer.

"You bet I do!"

"Cash?" continued the Tennessee Shad still hoping. "It's got to be cash down."

Skinner, back in a familiar way, flashed a bundle of bills and said:

"Why boy, just look these over."

"Go back!" said the Tennessee Shad.

He watched Skinner spring up the stairs, the roll of bills carried insolently in his hand.

"Well, it's sending him back to Macnooder," he thought wistfully, "making him a present, but I can't resist my nature!"

Dennis de Brian de Boru Finnegan, who, of course, could suspect only a little of the inner conflict, pressed his hand covertly in admiration of what he at once considered the highest mercantile strategy.

When, half an hour later, the Tennessee Shad

and the ebullient Skinner again descended the stairs to seal the compact in the usual way (Finnegan being detained by the annoyance of a recitation) the Tennessee Shad felt not the slightest elation. He glanced gloomingly at Skinner's immaculate creases going before him on the narrow walk and a feeling of remorse came over him, the flat heavy tasteless feeling that succeeds the plunge into temptation.

"It's the last time," he thought, glancing back at the Dickinson where several wolfish eyes still watched his progress. "It's the last time that walking safe deposit will ever open for me. Well, there's only one thing to be done. If it is the last, I'll eat till I bust!"

With this colossal heroism in mind he said to prepare the Beefsteak for the hecatombs that were to come.

"Skinner, Old Sporting Tootlets, I feel rather hungry."

"My boy," said the exultant purchaser, "go as far as you like."

The tone was the tone that answered obsequious head waiters in expensive metropolitan restaurants. The patronage decided the Tennes-

see Shad. The Beefsteak was really impossible when you treated him like a human being. He would show him no mercy.

"Well, Old Gazello," said the Uncooked Beefsteak, in imitation of Turkey Reiter, "pick out anything you want. You can't scare me, I've got the wad!"

He clapped him on the shoulder as a patron of gladiators might. The Tennessee Shad winced as from a blow and the last grumbling of his thin conscience died away.

"Shad, old boy!" said Skinner, throwing back his coat and allowing the tips of his pink fingers to slide along the blazing vest into the pockets. "You don't know what a real gorge is. I can't stand with you on this food here. It really is dyspeptic, you know. But say, wait till Thanksgiving, come up to the hotel with me and I'll show you what a real blow-out is. I'll put you up against some real sports, I will."

The Tennessee Shad swallowed his wrath, glancing about to make sure no one was within hearing distance.

"My boy," continued Skinner, forgetting himself, "you young ones here don't know me!"

"We don't, eh?"

"Not a bit. Why, when I come in, every head waiter in New York comes up on the jump. They have named a couple of dishes after me."

"You don't say so!"

"Fact."

"You're a little tin wonder, aren't you!" said the Tennessee Shad, beginning to be angry.

The constant opening of the pocketbook had stripped Skinner of the last semblance of awe toward the Tennessee Shad. He laughed a short, disagreeable laugh.

"A wonder? I'm a real sport — no ten-cent article like you put up with around here — the real dead game variety!"

This last indiscretion was too much for the Tennessee Shad. He left abruptly and dashing across the street, plunged through the doors of the Jigger Shop, straight into the arms of Mr. Lucius Cassius Hopkins, the Old Roman himself. For a second, face to face with that supreme flunker of boys, all thought deserted him. Then, assuming a look of combined grief and terror, he cried:

"A roll of court plaster and a bandage Al,

quick's you can! Fellow at house cut his foot!"

But at this moment the Uncooked Beefsteak all unprepared, flopped in, crying hilariously:

"Lord, Al, open up a whole can!"

Then he saw the Roman.

"A can of — court plaster? Yes?" said the Roman with a little joyful burbling sound. "Well, speak up."

"No, sir."

"Not court plaster?"

"No, sir."

"Just the ordinary destructive, daily poison — well?"

"Yes, sir," said the Tennessee Shad slowly.

"So."

The Roman paused and, shooting up an eyebrow, fixed them with his long glance as though to petrify them first and punish them after. Montague Skinner was chilled to the bone, a sensation further enhanced by perceiving from his angle of observation, a more fortunate pair of legs, *en cachette,* behind the counter.

Now the Roman ruled not simply by the weight of an iron hand, but by the terrors of an imagi-

nation endowed with humor and satire. And so, remembering that it was the Tennessee Shad who waited before him, he decided to fit the punishment to the criminal.

"No excuse — no further excuse — none at all? Imagination numbed — not working today? Too bad. Ten times around the Circle. Do it now."

The Tennessee Shad was thunderstruck. He went out in high indignation. Of course the Roman had done it on purpose. There were a dozen punishments he might have selected — sent him to Penal for an afternoon!— but to choose this, knowing his aversion to muscular strains! It was an outrage.

"Why, ten times around the Circle is over two miles," he said furiously as they tramped away. "I've never walked that in my life. The old rhinoceros, he did it on purpose! It's unfair. It's discrimination — persecution — tyranny. I've a mind to go right up to the Doctor."

"The Old Roman's down on you," said Skinner, who had learned a number of the routine formulas.

"Course he is, always has been. Nice mess you've got me in."

"How was I to know?" said Skinner.

The Tennessee Shad relapsed into gloomy meditation. What he did not voice aloud was that the real humiliation threatened was the spectacle of himself, yoked to the Beefsteak, parading before the hilarious audience of the school. Of course, Macnooder, of all persons, and the Dickinson cohorts, with the memory of defrauded threats, would come piling out to hoot him — caught in his own trap, publicly exposed as the boon companion, the bosom friend of the stolen Beefsteak.

The moment was critical, one of those public trials that changes in a twinkling a reputation and fastens a label of ridicule to a career of honor. What is more, the Tennessee Shad knew the peril.

In this state of immense mental perturbation and excited brain effort, the Tennessee Shad, heeled by the contrite Skinner, arrived at the edge of that vast area known as the Circle and gazed in horror, as the adventurous sailors of Columbus gazed at the limitless waters.

But fortune favored him. Directly in front stood a wheelbarrow waiting the reappearance of the gardener. His gaze left the stretches of the Circle and paused at the thing on wheels at his side. A moment later he said breathlessly:

"Beefsteak!"

"What?"

"Do you remember what the Roman told us?"

"Sure, ten times around the Circle."

"But the exact words?"

"That's it, ten times around the Circle."

"He didn't say *walk* ten times?"

"Why, no."

"Ah!" The Tennessee Shad drew a long, comforted breath. He was saved. Then, carefully considering the inexperienced Skinner, he said carelessly putting one foot on the wheelbarrow,

"Gee, if I could turn the laugh on the Old Roman! If I could get the best of him some way! They could fire me, I wouldn't care."

Skinner's glance in turn fell on the wheelbarrow.

"Eureka!"

"What is it?" said the Shad, wondering if he had taken the bait.

"I say! I have a wonderful idea. The wheelbarrow!"

"What about it?"

"We take turns, one gets in the wheelbarrow and the other wheels him around."

"Skinner, you're a genius," said the Tennessee Shad with great effusion. "It's the greatest joke ever heard. It'll kill the Roman. He'll explode. You're a hero, my boy. The whole school will cheer you on. How *did* you think of it?"

"Who'll start?"

"I will," said the Shad, hastily slipping into the wheelbarrow. "I weigh hardly anything, let her go."

Now the legs secreted behind the counter at the Jigger Shop belonged to Hungry Smead, who as soon as the Roman departed, had gone scampering gleefully back to the Dickinson with the joyful tale of the Tennessee Shad's having been caught with the Uncooked Beefsteak. In one minute the entire house came rushing out to behold the humiliation of the crafty usurper

of their own property. What they beheld instead was the lank limbs of the Tennessee Shad stuffed into the wheelbarrow that Skinner was trundling with an air of strained but supreme content.

"Well, I'll be jig-swiggered," said Macnooder ruefully.

"Can you beat him?"

"The Shad certainly is a wonder."

"How the deuce do you suppose he got him to do it?"

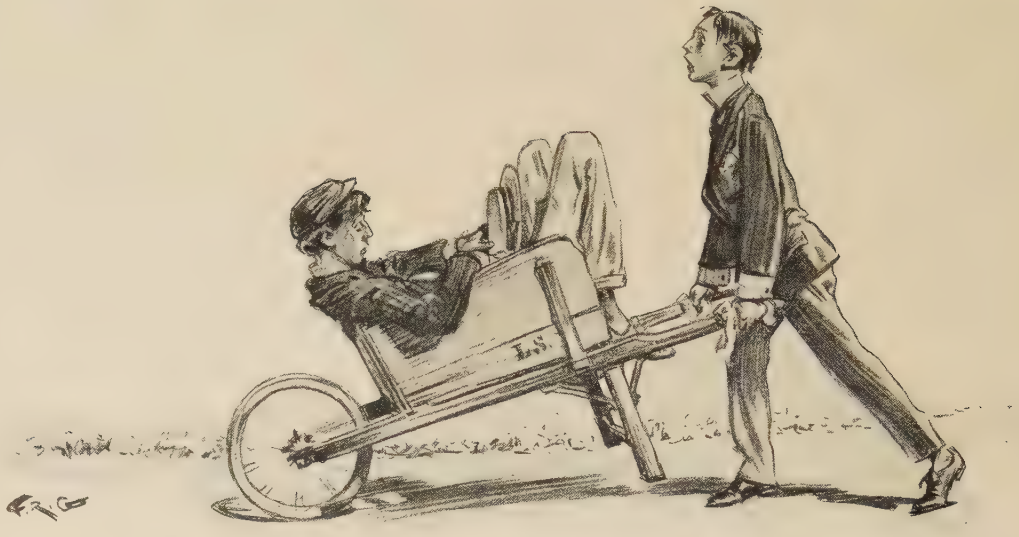
"Why, he's got the Beefsteak so hypnotized that he's grinning all over."

"He certainly is!"

"Boys, we can't help it, we'll have to give the Shad a cheer," said Macnooder overcome with admiration and soaring for once above the earthly line of dollars and cents in his enthusiasm for the artist, he said to himself, "I certainly must compromise, the firm has got to go on!"

"We certainly will."

The cheer that went rollicking over the campus, waking up the inmates of the Houses, encouraged Skinner wonderfully. He took it as a



THE TENNESSEE SHAD STUFFED INTO A WHEELBARROW THAT SKINNER WAS TRUNDLING

personal tribute. Startled by the unexpected clamor, the school came rushing to the windows, beheld the extraordinary voyage of the Tennessee Shad and sure of a sensation, came swarming out.

"Take it easy, Montague, old chap," said the Tennessee Shad. "Rest every half time around. Besides, we want the whole bunch to get on to us."

"Say, it's about your turn," said Skinner, happy but very hot.

"Never," said the Tennessee Shad firmly. "You're safe; you run no risks. But it's ten to one they fire me."

"I'll take the risk," said Skinner.

"No, you won't," said the Shad tragically. "Besides, it's a wonderful sell on the Roman, if I never touch foot to the ground. Oh, wonderful!"

"Still," said the Beefsteak doubtfully.

"My boy, the glory is all yours. You had the idea, you get all the credit," said the Shad, manfully resisting the temptation. "Hear that cheer? Look at the mob running over from the Upper — with cameras, too. It's the finest thing

ever happened. Twice around now, that's a fifth the distance already. Keep agoing."

By this time the Circle was lined with rollicking, roaring boys, vying with one another who should cheer the loudest for the Tennessee Shad.

"Don't cheer me fellows, cheer the Beefsteak," cried the Shad, giving the high sign. "It's his idea, he thought it up. Cheer for the Uncooked Beefsteak."

And the school, gazing on the perfectly satisfied countenance of Skinner, understood the part it had to play. Immense cheers for the unsuspecting dupe rolled forth, jumping from group to group that before respective houses crowded down to the edge of the roadway.

The Uncooked Beefsteak, with every muscle strained, saw only the triumph in front, knowing nothing of the hilarious groups behind his back, that locked arms and danced with joy.

"Isn't he wonderful?"

"Look at the Shad's face!"

"How does he look so solemn!"

"And the Beefsteak thinks he is it!"

"Oh, joy!"

"Oh, rapture!"

"Cheese it. Here he comes again."

"Three cheers, fellows, for Beefsteak!"

The rolling accompaniment of cheers spurred Skinner on to supreme efforts. He was absolutely, airily happy. He beamed on the procession of excited faces that shouted forth their encouragement and at times was so convulsed with his own humor that he was forced to stop to let the gale of merriment spend itself.

He waited no longer than was necessary to rest the ache in his armpits, and then was off on the glorious journey. At the completion of the sixth round, the Tennessee Shad insisted that he should be massaged and a dozen hands fought for the honor; another crowd with flapping handkerchiefs fanned air on his boiled complexion, while from all sides he heard the plaudits.

"Beefsteak, you're it!"

"The grandest scheme—"

"How did you think of it?"

"Keep it up."

"It's a record breaker."

"You're strong as an ox."

"All ready?" said the Tennessee Shad with maternal solicitude. "Here, wrap those handles with handkerchiefs, some of you loafers. Clear the way there, for Beefsteak!"

Intoxicated with the strong intoxication of the multitude, the seventh round was completed before he knew it. Then the roadway seemed suddenly to harden and strike his feet with the impact of every step. The Tennessee Shad began to grow to the proportions of P. Lentz and the circle to widen like the journeying ripples from a dropped stone. Four times he set down the awful burden and gasped for breath before the welcoming shouts went up.

"Eight rounds!"

"Only two more."

"Bully for the Beefsteak!"

"Strong as a blacksmith."

"More massage."

"Rub down the Beefsteak."

He began the ninth round; the chorus of shrieks and cheers was one steady howl in his ears, handkerchiefs and caps fluttered over his head, while dimly he heard new shouts.

"Go it there, you Beefsteak!"

"Show your speed."

"Hit up that pace."

"Make a record!"

Then he saw nothing but the interminable white space over the peaked head of the Tennessee Shad. Every fifty feet he set the wheelbarrow down to rest, doggedly resolved not to fail. Then the tenth round, the final triumph began. Ready to drop, paying for every yard gained by a hundred shooting pains, stopping, jerking along blindly, unheeding, he came at last to the supreme quarter and wheeled the Tennessee Shad straight to the entrance of the Kennedy House, set down the wheelbarrow and turned gloriously to view the triumph.

Suddenly he heard a shout wilder than all the rest and looking at the terrace of the Kennedy, beheld a sight that swept away the clouds of his illusion like a clap of wind. On the top step stood the Old Roman, a handkerchief at his eyes, doubling over with laughter, shaking hands, actually shaking hands, with the *Tennessee Shad.*

CHAPTER VII

FACTS LEADING TO A RECONCILIATION

After the Beefsteak's brief but disillusioning visit with the Tennessee Shad, Macnooder observed with satisfaction that while he had suffered — he had not improved.

Just what was the matter with the Uncooked Beefsteak was still a puzzle to the Dickinson House. It was quite evident that so long as he was oppressed and forced to the menial exercises of boot-blacking and clothes-pressing, he was moderately inoffensive. It was equally evident that the moment the ban was lifted in the slightest and he was restored to human intercourse, he became absolutely unbearable. But the reason thereof was not to be found.

"What the dickens is the matter with him anyhow," said Turkey Reiter. "We have certainly given him enough exercise."

"Ah, he'll never learn," said the Egghead, who always took a gloomy view.

"He's all right when he is cleaning out the room," said Hungry Smeed, who had never enjoyed the luxury of a valet.

"We certainly treat him like a dog."

"We certainly do!"

"It's a crime!"

"Well, what are you going to do about it?"

"You'd think he would learn a thing or two."

"Well, at any rate," said Macnooder, "he's stayed on the reservation lately. No wandering from the fireside, and all that sort of thing. I'll bet the Tennessee Shad's tongue is hanging out every time the Beefsteak goes over to the village."

Macnooder spoke vindictively, harboring vindictive impulses towards the Tennessee Shad ever since the return of the souvenir toilet set to the Dickinson. Likewise the Uncooked Beefsteak, innocently acting on the artful suggestion of the Tennessee Shad, had returned to Macnooder, in the joyful belief of restoring a sacrificed heirloom, the football shoes which Flash Condit did *not* wear when he crossed the Princeton goal line. As the restoration was made in pri-

vate, Doc Macnooder accepted it with admirable gravity and saved thereby a public advertisement. But the blow told.

It would not do, however, any longer to risk open warfare with the Tennessee Shad, backed by the busy imaginations of Dink Stover and Dennis de Brian de Boru Finnegan. Another would have sought revenge. Not so Macnooder. His instinct was always financial. If he could not destroy, he would combine. With this idea in mind he began, introspectively and outwardly, to seek for some scheme worthy to offer to the Tennessee Shad as basis for a new treaty. After a season of wandering dreamily, straw in mouth, cap set ruminatively on the incline of his head, a fortunate conjunction developed an idea which almost resulted in a football riot and did produce a situation that should be brought to the attention of the omniscient body of rules-makers if only to avert a lurking danger which might turn a scholarly clash of gladiatorial universities into a shambles.

Macnooder, after a week of fruitless searching, was gazing hopelessly out of the window at the departing candidates for the House elevens,

when a knock was heard and the voice of the Uncooked Beefsteak meekly sought admission.

Now for two days the ban had been lifted on the dispenser of Skinner's wealth, and Montague had been treated like a citizen; which, translated, means that the features of Turkey Reiter, the Triumphant Egghead, Macnooder, et cetera, had once more returned to the hostile interiors of the Jigger Shop and Conover's.

"Come in," said Macnooder.

The Uncooked Beefsteak found his way through the litter of bottles and boxes and joined Macnooder on the window-seat.

"Well, what's up?" said Macnooder critically perceiving at once an air of importance and pride about his visitor.

"I say, Doc," said Skinner, heedless of the cold and antagonistic glance, "what do you say to injecting a little sporting life into this dead hole?"

"Oh, you think it is a dead hole," said Macnooder softly.

Skinner stifled a yawn and ran two fingers down the creases of his trouser leg.

"Come off, now. You know it's dead."

"Say, you must have an idea."

"I have."

"Touch her off."

"What do you say to getting up a book on the house games?"

"Gambling, Rollo?" said Macnooder, turning over the thought rapidly.

"Oh, rot!" said Skinner. "Don't josh me now."

"I'm thinking hard."

"It's quite sporty and heaps of fun."

"You've done this before?"

"Sure."

"But don't you think that was very wrong of you, Montague?" said Macnooder, who had not yet determined on a course of action.

"If you are talking like that —" said Beefsteak blushing a litle, and rising.

"Sit down, sport," said Macnooder dreamily. "Elucidate a little on this here proposition of yours. Where would you begin?"

"I'd begin," said Beefsteak eagerly, "with the Kennedy — Woodhull Game next week."

"The Kennedy?" said Macnooder with a little start of interest.

"Why not?"

"But that's a cinch. No one would bet on that. Varsity men can't play this year, and the Woodhull ought to win thirty to nothing."

"Bet on the score, then."

Macnooder took a long time before replying. His gaze traveled across and up to the eyrie of the Tennessee Shad, and rested there fondly.

Finally, smothering his enthusiasm, he said slowly,

"Yes, I suppose that could be done."

"Same thing as betting to win and betting for place," said the Beefsteak in a sort of worldly way.

"But is this a square game?" said Macnooder.

"Oh, rather," said the Beefsteak. "Why, a bookmaker is the squarest thing a-going. I know a dozen of them."

"Now, he's off again on that eternal dead game sporting idea of his," said Macnooder to himself, mentally debating whether or not to consign him at once to the blacking brush. However, he temporized.

"Where, do I come in?"

"You are an expert adviser," said the Beef-

steak with just a touch of patronage. "You know the crowd better than I do. You'd better work up the bets."

"Oh, really!"

"And you get a third of the profits," said the Uncooked Beefsteak hastily.

"You supply the capital?" said Macnooder warily.

"Any amount!"

"It's most debauching!"

"Pooh! every gentleman places a little bet now and then," said the Beefsteak in his grandest manner.

At this moment a call resounded along the hall.

"Oh, you, Beefsteak, come here and press my pants!"

The gentleman of fashion disappeared in a twinkling. Skinner looked at Macnooder in a mute appeal.

"Better go," said Macnooder, thus relieved of all responsibility, "and to-morrow I'll give you an answer."

That night by recognized routes, Doc Macnooder journeyed in safety over to the Kennedy and

the lair of the Tennessee Shad. The conference was secret, complete, and satisfactory to all parties interested, and the first result was that the next morning the Uncooked Beefsteak was made happy by Macnooder's agreeing to act as a sporting partner in what was agreed should be a deliberate attempt to trim the Tennessee Shad.

Since the national game of football has been shorn of horns and hoofs, a little of the truth may be told of the joyful hecatombs of those earlier games in the nineties. Baseball on a professional field smooth as a billard cloth, under the protecting vision of clubbed discouragers of assault and battery, is one thing; the same pastime on a back lot amid boulders and broken bottles, with opposing gangs waiting and willing on the lines, is quite a different risk,— rated according to insurance tables.

Such was the relative position of the house games in the realm of football. They were strenuous affairs — rare opportunities when the best of friends could physically experiment on each other without an afterthought. Of

course all this is changed, but it was a good school, though a rude one, for the masculine animal, who, refine him as you may, must somehow fight his way through this world.

Now, the Kennedy having four members of the Varsity, was accordingly weakened in its house eleven. The Tennessee Shad, who, as may be remembered was thinner than his own shadow, was not exactly the most corpulent member of the eleven, but a fair representative of the average. He was at quarter-back, and Fatty Harris at center, a combination which looked very much like a cannon ball and a musket. Hungry Smeed, who even after he had consumed forty-nine pancakes, never weighed over one hundred and twenty, was at one end and Dennis de Brian de Boru Finnegan at the other. The guards weighed one hundred and forty and the tackles, the Gutter Pup and Lovely Mead, ten pounds less, and the situation is best understood when it is baldly stated that the team was so mortified that it had refused to stand up and be photographed.

The Woodhull team, on the contrary, was strong with second team men, averaged over one

hundred fifty pounds to a player, and was already conceded the house championship.

All of which made the conference of Kennedy enthusiasts on the evening before the game, a most oppressively silent gathering.

"It's a joke," said the Tennessee Shad, reclining on P. Lentz's cushioned frame, to save himself for the morrow's fray.

"The faculty sprung this dodge about debarring Varsity members just to beat us out of a championship."

"Sure!"

"They're down on us."

"I'll bet Old Baranson at the Woodhull worked it through himself."

"I'll bet he did!"

"Well," said Lovely Mead cheerily, "they'll beat us about thirty-six to nothing."

"Fifty-six!"

"A hundred and six!"

"Never mind, I'll get a crack at Cheyenne Baxter," said the Gutter Pup, who came from the same town and loved his friend.

"I've got a few love pats for Butsey White myself."

"They outweigh us twenty pounds to a man."

"Why, if a wind should start up blowing we wouldn't stay on the field!"

"If you fellows would only spring some of my trick plays," said Dennis de Brian de Boru Finnegan, "they'd never get hold of the ball."

"What's your pet idea?" said Stover, yanking the Irishman to him by an ankle and a wrist.

"It's called the fan-wedge," said Dennis, who never resigned hope. "It's just like this, see! The quarter gives the signal, everyone on the team runs back and out in the lines of the spokes of a fan, and the center snaps the ball when they are on the run. The fan divides and sweeps toward each end and the quarter makes a long pass to whichever side looks best. See?"

"Dennis," said Stover severely, "go stand in the corner."

"It'll work, Dink, you see if it won't!"

"What idea is the Shad browsing on?" said Stover, squelching Finnegan by covering his head with a sweater.

"Oh, I'm kind of thinking of something," said the Tennessee Shad in a noncommittal way.

"Something that is good for thirty-six points?"

"My idea is a secret," said the Tennessee Shad loftily, "but if it works it will most certainly reduce the score."

At this came an interruption.

"Here comes Macnooder!"

"And the Beefsteak!"

"What's his game?"

"He's coming over to give us the laugh."

"Keep quiet," said the Shad quickly. "Don't get in a huff. Just let me draw him out."

There now appeared, followed by the Uncooked Beefsteak at a valet's distance, Doc Macnooder with a pair of uncased opera glasses strapped to his back, trailing a bamboo cane, a pencil over one ear and a note book in one hand. His approach was received in various ways; by the younger members with expectant grins, by the veterans with wary defensive looks, while the Gutter Pup openingly and insultingly took the twenty-two cents that burdened his change pocket, counted them, and slipped them down his sock.

"Ah there!" said Macnooder, affably saluting

with his bamboo cane. "Very pleasant evening, gentlemen. Nice day for ducks,— white ducks, of course! Let me present to you Mr. Montague Skinner, my betting commissioner."

"Your what?" said two or three voices.

"I think I said betting commissioner," said Macnooder in his most inviting way. "Monte, did I say betting commissioner? I did. This, gentlemen, is a little betting account, called a book, that I finger thus between my thumb and my first finger. I am told there are a number of gents, called dead game sports, in this House, and I just dropped over to accommodate them. A little flier on the game, eh?"

At this there was a low, rumbling, portentous sound and Dink Stover, as president of the House, was about to order the proper measures when he suddenly beheld the left eyelid of the Tennessee Shad fluttering on his bony cheek.

"Now, little bounding boys," said Macnooder, genially poising a pencil, "we will do this in professional fashion; winner first, place afterward. Any Sporting Life eager to place a bet on the Kennedy to win to-morrow's game, step up.

Step up, but don't crowd. We give you two to one, Woodhull to win. Did I hear a noise?"

"You are a dead game sport, you are," said P. Lentz sarcastically. "Why don't you ask us to give you the money?"

"Three to one," said Macnooder instantly.

"How generous!"

"Five to one."

"We're still listening."

"Six and seven to one. Eight to one. Dollars to doughnuts, in jiggers, in bank notes, in thousands. Come one, come all. Our capital is unlimited. Ten to one, then. Ten to one the Woodhull wins the game!"

"Ten to one the grass comes up in the spring," said the Gutter Pup sarcastically.

"Ten to one the earth goes around the sun."

"Ten to one *you* don't lose whichever way it comes out!"

At this, Doc Macnooder hastily changed the subject.

"Anyone want to bet on the score? Any dead game Kennedy sport got any feeling of confidence at all?"

"What do you want to bet?" said P. Lentz at last, stung into action.

"Even the Woodhull wins by fifteen points."

P. Lentz looked at Macnooder as Al at the Jigger Shop was wont to look when the charge account had been overstretched.

"Well, now, what's your idea?" said Macnooder professionally. "Speak up my man, speak up!"

"I'll bet you even," said King Lentz very slowly, "that they don't score over twenty-four points."

At this juncture a little lukewarm enthusiasm began to appear, and when Macnooder, after a whispered conference with Skinner, expressed his willingness, quite a number of wagers were recorded. The Tennessee Shad however, remained obdurate until thirty points had been conceded, when he at length responded, entraining in his fall Finnegan and the Gutter Pup.

"Say, it's a cinch," said Macnooder knowingly to the Uncooked Beefsteak, when they had returned to their rooms.

"Why, thirty points is nothing at all," said Skinner joyfully.

"Nothing!"

"Gee, I certainly wanted to get back at that Tennessee Shad."

"Sure you did. Well, you got him. He swallowed the whole fishing pole."

"But can we collect?" said Skinner, struck by a sudden horrid thought.

"Now, that's an idea," said Macnooder. "We must fix that. I tell you what. Give me your money, and we'll make Turkey Reiter stakeholder and I'll round up those paper collar sports in the Kennedy and make them plunk up to-night."

The Uncooked Beefsteak became so superhumanly unbearable under the stimulus of his new venture that the House in self defense was forced to set him to darning socks. So sure was he of his approaching victory over the Tennessee Shad that not even this additional humiliation could disturb his equanimity. In the afternoon, after scrubbing off the degrading stains of blacking from his fingers, he slanted his pearl gray

fedora at the proper rakish angle on his head, and, rejoicing inwardly, sauntered down to the third field to watch the preliminaries of the game.

The shivering line of the Kennedy was running through the signals in a weak discouraged way, while the well-nurtured, brawny team of the Woodhull, as though disdaining superfluous exertion, was languidly tossing the pigskin to and fro.

The Uncooked Beefsteak spread his feet, clasped his hands behind his back and, looking over the antagonists, smiled a thoroughly satisfied smile. About him reassuring comments went up.

"Say, it's a shame!"

"They'll never be able to count the points."

"The Woodhull ought to lend them a couple of men."

"They'll tire themselves out running down the field."

"Why, there won't even be a first class scrap in it!"

Macnooder came up, looking very canny.

"Say, Beefsteak, I've worked the Shad into doubling all his bets. How about it?"

The Uncooked Beefsteak wrung his hands furtively but with great feeling.

Jack Rabbit Lawson, referee, a fifth former with a flower in his buttonhole and a choker tie of several antagonistic shades, now passed languidly on to the field, and called the teams together, announcing in routine, half-hearted fashion, as he had done in a dozen games before,

"Of course fellows, no roughing it."

"Oh, no!"

"Nothing brutal, nothing coarse!"

"Oh, dear no!"

"Remember, this is a gentleman's game."

"You bet we will!"

"I shall be very strict."

"Yes, Mr. Referee."

"The Woodhull wins the toss. The Kennedy kicks off. Are you ready?"

By common consent, the first line-up was devoted to a friendly exchange of amenities, with honors about even between Cheyenne Baxter and the Gutter Pup, who came from the same town, and Butsey White and Fatty Harris, who were too closely related.

With the second line-up the game began in earnest. There were many scores to wipe out

between the two houses, and Ginger Pop Rooker at quarter for the Woodhull had no intention of losing the verbal opportunity of the present advantage.

"Oh, I say, fellows," he said in a careless, bored way. "What's the use of using the signals? Let's tell 'em where we're going. Ram the ball right through Lovely Mead and that little squirt of an Irishman! On your toes! Let her come!"

The humiliated Kennedy swarmed frantically to the point attacked, only to be borne back for a five yard loss. The Woodhull came gleefully to its feet, laughing hilariously.

"Good eye, Ginger!"

"Tell them every time!"

"Poor old Kennedy!"

"All ready," said Rooker to the shrieks of the spectators. "Put it right through the Gutter Pup this time. Hard now!"

For thirty yards the outraged Kennedy was swept back before a fumble stopped the insolent advance. Cheyenne Baxter, at left half, for the Woodhull, owing to a retiring left eye, either saw imperfectly or with his battling right eye fixed

on his chum, the Gutter Pup, momentarily forgot the technical presence of the superfluous football.

At any rate the Kennedy lined up, plunged at the opposing line and were carried back five yards to the accompaniment of derisive shrieks from the squabs of the Woodhull on the side lines.

There was a hurried consultation in which the Tennessee Shad was seen with his lips to Fatty Harris's ear, and then the team massed for a plunge on center. The ball was passed, there was a forward lunge, a churning movement; half the players went down in a heap and suddenly a report like a dynamite explosion was heard. Among the spectators a clamor arose.

"What the deuce has happened?"

"They've squashed Fatty Harris!"

"Fatty Harris is blown up!"

"Punctured!"

"Squashed flat!"

"Exploded!"

"No, it's the ball!"

"He's bust the ball!"

"He certainly has."

"Flat as a pancake."

"Fatty has smashed the ball!"

"Well, where *is* the ball?"

This last cry quickly communicated itself to the frantic Woodhull team, who, throwing themselves on Fatty Harris, rolled him over and discovered that the pigskin had vanished.

At this moment a wild, gleeful shriek arose from behind the Woodhull goal posts, and the Tennessee Shad was seen extracting from under his sweater the flattened pigskin. Instantly the field overflowed with the shock of waters, triumphant or frantic.

"Touchdown!"

"Robbers!"

"Touchdown for the Kennedy."

"Call him back!"

"Dead ball."

"Hurrah for the Tennessee Shad!"

"Muckers!"

"No mucker tricks!"

"The ball was down."

"Call it back!"

"Judgment!"

"Judgment, Mr. Referee!"

Jack Rabbit Lawson, hauled to and fro between the contending parties, found himself in the most serious predicament into which a referee can fall, when a decision must be given and either decision requires an escort of police. Moreover, each contending party, to clinch the judgment, had precipitated itself upon him and the struggle for his possession raged like the contention of Greek and Trojan over the body of Patroclus.

"Don't let those thugs bluff you, Jack!" shouted the Kennedy cohorts, in possession of an arm and a leg.

"Square deal, no cheating!" retorted the Woodhull with a commanding grip on the other extremities.

Fresh arrivals surged in, seeking to fasten on him,

"Touchdown!"

"No touchdown!"

"Square deal!"

"Justice!"

"No intimidation!"

"No mucker tricks!"

"Hands off," shouted Jack Rabbit Lawson. "Let go of me!"

"Mr Referee," said the Tennessee Shad, artfully cool, "I demand that the game go on."

"The game must go on," said the referee, immensely relieved.

"Never," shouted the furious Woodhull.

"Mr. Referee," said the Tennessee Shad with magnificent impudence, "they know we've got 'em licked! I demand that the game go on Settle the point afterward!"

At this, just as he intended, the Woodhull quite forgot that it was only a question of walking through the unresisting line in their fury at the trick sprung on them. With one accord they responded.

"We won't go on!"

"Don't give the robbers a point!"

"Don't you stand for it!"

"Judgment, Mr. Referee!"

"Let go of me, there, will you?" said Jack Rabbit Lawson for the tenth time. "I'll look it up in the rules."

Churning at his heels, the whole mass swept him on to the Upper, except where in spots little

detached groups of enthusiasts sought their own solutions. At the Esplanade the crowd waited vociferously while Lawson went to his room, accompanied by the Tennessee Shad for the Kennedy and Ginger Pop Rooker for the Woodhull.

Lawson, having closed his collar and coaxed his necktie back into a normal position, looked sternly at Rooker and said,

"Now, what's your argument?"

"My argument," said Ginger Pop turbulently, "is that a ball is dead when it is a dead ball! And furthermore, we are playing a game called football, and not 'Button, button, who's got the button,' or 'going to Jerusalem,' or 'Post office,' or —"

"Hold up there," said Jack Rabbit magisterially, "that's enough. Your argument is a good one. Now, Shad, what's yours?"

"I have three arguments," said the Tennessee Shad, rising, with his thumb over the second button of his waistcoat. "First, the play had never stopped; second, you won't find anything against it; and third, this bunch of soreheads would have done the same thing if they had had a cute little boy like me."

"Your position is very strong," said Jack Rabbit Lawson, nodding to the Tennessee Shad. "I will now look it up in the rules."

He read through the fine print laboriously and solemnly and closed the book.

"Well?" said the rival counsels in a breath.

"There are things here," said Lawson judiciously, "that I want to think over. I will announce my decision in an hour."

At that time the mob gathered once more. Jack Rabbit Lawson appeared at his window and announced that he had read the rules again and was still deliberating, but that his decision would infallibly be given at five o'clock.

Suddenly, their fury having had a certain time to cool, the Woodhull all at once woke up and grasped the amazing fact of their own blunder in not continuing a contest that could have but one outcome.

Consequently as the Tennessee Shad, camped on the Esplanade in the midst of the embattled Kennedy, was receiving congratulations, a suave delegation from the Woodhull headed by Ginger Pop Rooker with his blandest smile, approached, and the following conversation took place:

"Hello there, you foxy old Shad!"

"Hello, yourself."

"Say, you certainly worked a slick one over us."

"Is it possible?"

"Look here, it did make us rather hot at first, but we certainly have to take off our hats to you. That was a corking idea, a wonder, a peacherino, and perfectly square."

"Oh, don't make me blush."

"I say, old boy, we give in!"

"You do, eh?"

"Yes, we admit your claim. We'll agree to a touchdown. So now let's go back and finish the game."

The Tennessee Shad looked long and sadly at Rooker then he laid his head on P. Lentz's shoulder and began to laugh. The laugh irritated Rooker and likewise alarmed him.

"I say, Shad, shall we play it over now or tomorrow?"

Then the Tennessee Shad spoke languidly,

"No, dear boy, no. You had your chance on the field, and you refused, think of it, you *refused* to go on! Of course we'd have licked you to a

scramble anyway, but, oh, well, we'll let it go at six to nothing."

"What, you won't play it over?" cried a dozen angry voices.

"Don't ask me."

"Why, you robber!" said Rooker, immediately changing his tone, "you low-down robber!"

"Thank you!"

"You little sneak thief!"

"A baby trick!"

"Mucker gag!"

"We'll appeal to Walter Camp."

"Do," said the Tennessee Shad, "keep on appealing. But you're licked, and remember this, that I rushed the ball right through you, right through the whole Woodhull line!"

This being a little super-insulting, the Kennedy took up a little stronger defensive position as the Woodhull advanced. The tension however, was fortunately averted by the sudden appearance at his window of Jack Rabbit Lawson, who, having locked and fortified his door, now addressed the crowd.

"Fellows, I have read over the rules a third time, and I have come to a decision."

"Hurray!"

"Touchdown!"

"No score!"

"Woodhull!"

"Kennedy!"

"Shut up!"

"Let him talk!"

"Fellows, I have decided," said Jack Rabbit Lawson firmly, in the midst of a hollow silence, "I have decided TO RESIGN!"

And closing the window abruptly, he withdrew, nor could threats or cajolery ever draw from him an opinion on the case.

To avert a civil conflict, the Doctor at once appointed a faculty committee to render a decision within the half-hour. This committee, rejecting as immaterial the Woodhull's contention that the Tennessee Shad had used a sharpened nail, was guided by an almost analogous incident in the Harvard-Indian game, where, it may be remembered, a touchdown was scored by an aborigine concealing the pigskin under the back of his jersey, and running the length of the field through the bewildered scholars. The tremendous classic prestige of Cambridge being

decisive, judgment was rendered for the Kennedy, with this proviso: that the game should not be played over, and all adherents were ordered quarantined in their respective Houses for twenty-four hours.

The Uncooked Beefsteak, shocked and bewildered, went limply toward the Dickinson. Half way, Turkey Reiter, stake-holder, accosted him.

"Hello there, Sporting Tootlets!"

The Uncooked Beefsteak stopped and feebly responded,

"Oh, hello!"

"Rather bad day for book-makers, eh?"

"I don't understand it at all."

"Well, I paid over the stakes," said Turkey Reiter mercilessly. "Say — rather expensive educating us, isn't it?"

Skinner shook his head.

"I don't understand. Where's Macnooder?"

"Doc? Over with the Tennessee Shad."

"With the Tennessee Shad!" said the Beefsteak, shocked. "Why, we got this up to trim him!"

"Look here, son," said Turkey Reiter, relenting a little, "you put this down from me — the

only way to trim either of those weasels is to trim them together!"

Skinner took off his hat and slowly spun it on one finger, gazing stolidly at the windows of the Tennessee Shad.

"And now, Old Gazello," said Turkey, who enjoyed an occasional lapse into moralizing, "really you are not up to teaching these coons anything as yet, let alone sinful wicked practices. Savez? Better sit down at our feet and pick up a few pearls."

The Beefsteak, incapable of reply, moved slowly away.

"Don't try to be a bad man," continued the moralist. "Don't listen too much to the chink of the coin in your pockets. Don't try to buy your way here, because it won't go — it won't go, my boy! But — if nothing will stop you, if you've got to get rid of the dough, for the love of Mike, give me a chance!"

CHAPTER VIII

THE BEEFSTEAK APPLIES FOR ADMISSION

Fortunately for the firm, despite his previous trying experiences, it must be confessed that the Uncooked Beefsteak still clung to those sporting proclivities which, in more worldly communities, are regarded as the natural distinctions of a gentleman. Reduced by his disrespectful housemates to menial degradations as humiliating as endured by other kings in exile, the spirit of ambition was yet strong in him — the spirit to excel in some field, to rise from the mass at whatever cost, to be known as an individual and not a type.

Unfortunately, the field was limited. He was not an athlete and he lazily had no desire to be one. He neither sang, nor was the cause of melody in instruments. He did not act nor was he given to journalism. All this was in the undeveloped area into which he had never ventured,

satisfied with his own beau ideal of a man of fashion.

However, it did seem to the Beefsteak, despite certain disillusionment which he had encountered since his advent to Lawrenceville, that the school was sadly in lack of what is vulgarly known as a true gentleman-sport — the two names, in his mind, being complementary, if not synonymous. Of course, a number of the fellows rejoiced in the very common nickname of "Sport," but the title had certainly been conveyed without the slightest notion of its distinction.

To Skinner's critical mind a gentleman-sport was not only a disciple of that magnificent Englishman, Beau Brummel, but of that other distinguished Britisher, the Marquis of Queensbury, who, while laying down the full etiquette of the law, was always found at the side of the prize ring and never within it. Likewise this ideal was one who never counted his change, never quarreled over a bill, who played with existence and wagered on the simplest turns of fate with anybody for anything. To be a gentleman-sport, then, was to be magnificent, elegant and racy;

and to be the first gentleman-sport in the school was, in a word, the ambition to which the Uncooked Beefsteak still clung, despite all reverses and the combined educational efforts of his housemates.

However, his skirmishes with the Tennessee Shad and Doc Macnooder had instilled in him a spirit of canniness. He no longer exposed his roll of bank notes, trailing it so to speak, on a string behind him. Instead, his first instinct when approached, was a convulsive movement towards the more secure buttoning of his coat. This educational result of their efforts was not, it must be confessed, so pleasing to Doc Macnooder and the Tennessee Shad, who, having become reconciled, sought separately but fruitlessly to enlist the Beefsteak in several schemes to humiliate the other.

Turkey Reiter alone was not suspected, for Turkey as President of the House had undertaken a series of lectures on moral conduct. These excursions into morality were delivered, strangely enough, in only four places: at Laloo's, to the bubbling noise of the steaming Hot-Dogs; at Appleby's before the turkish paste; at the Jig-

ger Shop, and at Conover's. Why the spirit should refuse to move elsewhere, went unnoticed by the Uncooked Beefsteak, who was immensely flattered by the solicitude of the great Turkey Reiter, listened a little and always begged the privilege of standing treat. The Beefsteak, still persistent, recurred to the Tennessee Shad and Doc Macnooder.

"Gee, I'd like to get back at those bunco-steerers," he said, digging his teeth viciously into an unresisting frankfurter.

"Be humble, son," said Turkey Reiter, with paternal impressiveness.

"I'll get them yet."

"Others have tried," said Turkey Reiter, with a reminiscent twinge. "Your game, young rooster, is to be humble."

"Well, now," said the Beefsteak, with a sudden access of frankness, as they were alone, "say just what is the matter with me anyhow?"

"It's not just one thing, old gazello," said Turkey comfortingly. "Though, of course, there is one thing that is dead against you."

"What's that?"

"You're a billionaire."

The Uncooked Beefsteak stared very seriously at the can where the hot-dogs were bubbling, and said:

"I wonder if that is it?"

"Sure, you're fair game. You're the fresh meat for every hungry coot who is strapped and waiting for the first of the month to come around. Say, bub, do you know what I'd do if I were you?"

"What?"

"Burn the bank and strip to a dollar a week," said Turkey, rushing on enthusiastically, either because moralizing was apt to run away with his discretion or because the near approach of a recitation rendered impossible any further favors from the munificence criticized.

"Oh, I say —"

"Sure," said Turkey, become like many another, the victim of his own argument, "these are wise words, sonny. Cut out the treating, get down in our midst, and let us educate you on proper lines. Savez!"

"What! Never treat?"

"Never."

"No one at all?"

"Well, only —" said Turkey, pausing a bit and clapping the Beefsteak on the shoulder in an extra amicable way, "only a fellow who's doing you good."

The Beefsteak watched Turkey Reiter go, chuckling, helter-skelter back to recitation and remained a moment in thoughtful meditation over the dubious interpretation of his last words. Then he paid the bill and went slowly up the village street.

Directly in front of him, in full possession of the walk, was a bull-dog, of no more reassuring aspect than bull-dogs usually are. As Appleby was at the window and several fellows lounging in the doorway, Skinner marched resolutely forward expecting the passage to be yielded. Ten feet away, as the maneuver only resulted in a certain disconcerting fixity of the brute's gaze, he made a wide detour and deferred to another day the issue whether or not the irreproachable aroma of trousers made at New York's most expensive tailor, would appeal to that sense of aristocracy which is said to be instinctive in the canine.

The dog, who was felicitously named Tough,

was the property of Blimmy Garret of the Woodhull, who besides rejoicing in the distinction of having risen to six feet six, was on account of his possession of a mustache and a real discouraging bull-dog, generally regarded as filling the position to which Skinner longingly aspired — the premier dead game sport of the school.

The companionship of Tough had been rather expensive to Blimmy. Due to several cases of carelessness on the dog's part, he had been forced to buy the silence of Klondike who shook up the beds in the Dickinson and pay Blinky, the one-eyed purveyor of cigarettes, ten dollars and replace the shredded trousers.

Tough was supposed to inhabit a suite in the village, but being by nature inclined to good society he had learned at the sound of a professorial tread to retire under the window-seat and remain until the danger had passed. Despite which, the All-Seeing Eye was decidedly fixed in the direction of Tough and waiting a logical excuse.

The Uncooked Beefsteak had no sooner completed the outer trail than a patter of feet and a slight asthmatic snort behind revealed the fact

that the brute was deliberating at his heels. Now if the Beefsteak's courage had never been tested by a frontal attack, it was doubly uncertain when momentarily expecting a crisis behind. There was still twenty yards to the Jigger Shop and an acceleration of pace might have fatal results.

At this moment, the Uncooked Beefsteak, looking ahead, thankfully perceived the true cause of the commotion at his heels.

In front of Bill Orum's, the cobbler, another dog, with certain marks that would permit him for purposes of classification to be described as a setter, was rounding the corner with tail set and carefully poised step. The last animal was Henry Clay, the property of Bill Orum who stoutly declared that his dog could annihilate anything that attacked him on the *left* side; the right eye having gloriously gone in a victorious career.

Just which side the bull-dog selected in his forward movement would be hard to determine, but in another second the joined bodies were revolving in the dust much after the fashion of a giant pin-wheel that has jumped its fastenings. At

the uproar that fell upon the street, a crowd came rushing out while the rival owners, hastening up, finally secured possession of the hind-quarters of their respective champions. Then it was found that the bull-dog had a secure grip on the pride of the cobbler shop at the throat directly beneath the closed right eye.

In this *impasse* Al from his wisdom produced an ammonia bottle and Tough yielded to science what he would not have yielded to nature. Blimmy Garret hastily smuggled the victorious Tough to a place of concealment while the crowd, drifting away, left a few to listen to Bill Orum's haranguing on the result and his repeated assertion that Tough would have been a dead dog by now if he had attacked on the *left* side.

"That dog of Blimmy's certainly needs a licking," said Al, whose eyes and throat had received their measure of the ammonia.

"He certainly does," said Skinner, in full agreement.

"A lot of reputation he's got," said Al contemptuously, "licking a lot of curs and a wall-eyed setter whose teeth have to be tied in!"

"I'd like to bring a real bruiser down here," said Skinner, with a knowing look.

"Go ahead."

"By jingo, I will," said Skinner determinedly as he walked home. "Or, at any rate, I'll find a pup who'll make mince-meat of that sassy coyote."

Now, the Beefsteak's mind did not as yet work with that instinctive flight towards a novel idea that was the characteristic of the veteran. As a consequence, it was only after having repeatedly expressed a desire to get even with the brute who had given him such a chilly few moments that the complete idea finally took shape.

He stopped as though he had stubbed his toe, overcome with the beauty of his inspiration. His first impulse was to rush with it to Macnooder and the Tennessee Shad with a request to be admitted into the firm. But though he had learned little, he had learned something. Bridling his enthusiasm he forced himself to go twice around the Circle, working out the details of his scheme.

"Gee, the greatest ever. I'll be a chief promoter myself, and get up a dog fight," he confidently proclaimed.

When the Uncooked Beefsteak approached the firm of Macnooder and the Tennessee Shad he did so with so much business discretion that the veterans were clearly amazed.

"I want a few words with you two," said The Beefsteak, with a certain manner. "No bluff — but an out-and-out understanding!"

"Why, Montague, how you have aged!" said Macnooder in soft surprise.

"It's no joke this time," said Skinner, waving the persiflage aside. "I've got a scheme and I want an understanding. Now I'll be frank."

"Hello," said Macnooder, who from constant use of this last assurance became suspicious of the words on another's tongue.

"You fellows are about the cutest thing out. You've flim-flammed me, and you've done it well. I'm not kicking, only I've got my eyes open now. And you'll never get me again."

At this tempting challenge, Macnooder looked over the roofs of the houses, afraid to meet the eye of the Tennessee Shad.

"See here," continued Skinner, with more gravity, as he mistook their silence, "I'm for you

fellows and I want to get into your game on the ground floor."

"What game?"

"Promoting."

"Bring us an idea," said Macnooder.

"I have."

"You've got me."

"The best."

"What is it?"

"Get up a professional dog-fight, Blimmy's bull-pup and some other dog we'll get. Sell tickets and run it off in the woods at midnight."

Macnooder looked at the proud Beefsteak and then solemnly at his partner.

"Shad," he said, "extend to Monte the right hand of fellowship."

"We must get a dog, though, that will dine off Tough," said Skinner.

"I know one," said the Tennessee Shad dreamily.

"Where?" said the Beefsteak eagerly.

"Trenton," said the Tennessee Shad, "a long-haired dog, that's the game. Bull-dogs are pie before long-haired dogs — can't get at the throat."

"The Tennessee Shad'll look after the challenge, then," glibly said Macnooder, who from old experience read aright the note of dreaminess in his partner's voice and knew something was brewing. "Who'll referee?"

"I will," said the Uncooked Beefsteak.

Macnooder glanced at the Shad and saw a little smile of satisfaction on those thin lips.

"I suppose I've got to be secretary and treasurer, then," he said, with false weariness.

"That's the stuff," said the Beefsteak autocratically. "Besides, I've seen a real fight and know the game."

"It's a good idea," said Macnooder after the vow of secrecy had been passed and the Beefsteak had gone, walking a little lightly on his toes.

"Yes."

"But, couldn't we put it over on the Beefsteak just once more — just one little final touch?" said Macnooder, to learn what the Shad was planning.

The Tennessee Shad remained a long time in cloudy speculation. Then he scratched his head, replaced his cap, and said carefully:

"To-morrow, Doc, I'll tell you all about it — to-morrow."

The Uncooked Beefsteak's eagerness to claim the lime light was quite in accordance with the plans of Macnooder and the Tennessee Shad. The more Skinner took upon himself, the more complacently they viewed the outlook. For some time it had become increasingly difficult for the firm of Macnooder to arouse any general enthusiasm for its speculative offerings. Particularly was this true of any attempt to collect before the fact.

Consequently, with great magnanimity, they assured the unsuspecting Skinner that the honor being his, they were determined he should have all the glory and suggested that whatever publicity was needed should come from him.

Skinner was allowed to announce the great event, to challenge Blimmy Garret in behalf of his champion and most important of all, to sell as many tickets as he could at the rate of fifty cents a head. Macnooder, modestly keeping in the background, received the receipts and safe-

guarded them, urging that no mention should be made of this trifling service.

By thus prominently displaying the Uncooked Beefsteak, they succeeded in working up a tremendous amount of enthusiasm in quarters which would have been decidedly lukewarm had the great sporting event borne the names of Macnooder and the Tennessee Shad.

When Skinner had collected and turned over to Macnooder the proceeds of thirty tickets, and had arranged the date and selected an ideal location in the groves that border the distant canal, he suddenly became rather panicky as to the mysterious champion whom the Tennessee Shad was to provide, and rushed all in a flutter to the Kennedy for reassurance.

"Be calm," said the Tennessee Shad, "I have the dog."

"Have you seen him?"

"I have."

"When?"

"This afternoon."

"Then he's near here?" said Skinner, surprised.

"I have him in training quarters," said the

Tennessee Shad, with a mysterious wave of his hand. "Within a mile of where I stand."

"Training?" said Skinner, mystified.

"Feeding him on raw veal and mustard. You can spread the report that he's bitten two men in the last three days. That shows what he'll do to that china bull-pup of Blimmy's."

"You said he was a collie?"

"German-Collie, a bruising ugly-tempered, rampaging collie."

"Supposing Tough licks him?" said the Beefsteak anxiously, contemplating a wager.

"A long-haired collie?" said the Shad loftily. "Greatest fighter in the world. Why, Tough will never get his tooth in him. Put up all your money on it!"

"I wish I could see him," said the Beefsteak doubtfully.

"Course you do," said the Shad sympathetically. "But if you do, then Blimmy has a right to see. And say, if Blimmy sees this living death — it's all off. No bets, and no fight."

"Really!"

"Keep it quiet."

"By the way, what's the dog's name?"

"Dynamite."

The next afternoon the Shad arrived with a worried look.

"Say, Beefsteak, can't you put ahead the date?"

"What's the matter?"

"Why that brute of mine is chewing up everything in sight."

"No!"

"Fact, he tore the feathers off a duck and mangled a milk pail they left by mistake. We've got him boxed now."

"Supposing we pull it off to-morrow night."

"I don't think we can hold him any longer."

When Blimmy Garret heard the tales of butchery emanating from the opposite camp he was equal to the occasion.

"You go back, young stripling," he said imperiously to Skinner, "go back to whoever backs that ki-yi, and tell that old four-flusher that if his mongrel isn't any fiercer than that there won't be enough of him to line a pair of mittens!"

"They keep him shut up in a box," said the Beefsteak doubtfully.

"They do, do they? Well, you tell 'em we're holding Tough in a trunk with a couple of shot-laden trays over him too."

"They say he's even attacked a milk pail!"

"Oh, he has?" said Blimmy, growing indignant. "Well, tell them Tough is so wild, we've had to wedge his jaws."

"What for?"

"To keep him from wearing down his teeth when he thinks of that pup Dynamite," said Blimmy very seriously. "And say, go back and tell your friend that we don't want even another day. Pull the affair off to-night, or I won't answer for the spectators."

"All right," said Skinner, running off.

"Oh, I say!"

"What?"

"Tell him Tough will be there in a box, all right!"

"All right."

"And hold up, are you putting up a bet?"

"No — o," said Skinner, "I'm the referee. I can't."

When in the watches of the night, a shivering

band of would-be sports bent on feverish dissipation gathered expectantly by the light of half a dozen lanterns in a distant and gloomy spot, the ferocious rumors from the rival camps had become common property and in certain quarters there was a marked impulse to seek places of security rather than the natural points of vantage.

"Have you ever been at one of these things?" said Shrimp Davis, who was the youngest allowed to qualify as a sport.

"No," said Pewee Bacon in the same woodland whisper. "It's pretty risky, isn't it?"

"There ought to be a ring with a high wall around it," said the Triumphant Egghead, who was always critical. "Something to protect the spectators."

"That's right."

"There's no telling what a dog will bite."

"And if his jaws set on you, they never let go."

"Say, this is a rotten place for a fight."

"Well, I wore leather boots and shin guards."

Meanwhile, Skinner dressed to kill in the flashiest of all his flashy vests and ties, checked suit and feathered fedora, was anxiously superin-

tending the marking off of the ring, carefully selected a level glade among a clump of melancholy pines. Four stakes were driven in and several lengths of ropes stretched around.

"Say, the Beefsteak's quite the fellow, isn't he," said Pewee much impressed.

"He certainly has seen a lot of life."

The preparations for the safety of the public did not impress.

"What are they stringing up ropes for?"

"Huh, to keep us out of the ring."

"Is that all the guarantee we get?"

"And they say both pups haven't had a square meal in thirty-six hours."

"Oh, mother!"

"A dog's bite is poisonous, isn't it?"

"Sure, they burn you out with a red hot poker."

"Oh, joy!"

"What's that?"

"Have they come?"

A series of yelps were now heard approaching from opposite directions and presently two wheelbarrows bearing sinister noisy boxes appeared out of the gloom. There was a rush in the direc-

tion of the Tennessee Shad and Macnooder, but all lingering incredulity was dissipated when the light of a lantern revealed behind the slats of an improvised cage, the dim head of a large collie — German or otherwise.

Macnooder, who had a strong dramatic instinct, was in sweater and high boots, a rag over his forehead and several crosses of black court-plaster on his cheeks, which were at once taken to be proofs of the fighting qualities of the challenging Dynamite.

Both dogs, as a result of the exceedingly lumpy journey they had come, combined with the prodding received from two zealous owners, were in a humor more human than canine. As a consequence, no sooner had the full effect of their anger reached the crowd, than there began a curious shifting movement among the spectators; those in front slipping to the back while those who were promoted surrendered instantly their vantage.

The two boxes were placed at opposite sides of the ring, and the seconds summoned by Skinner met in the middle for conclave.

"So *you're* back of this!" said Blimmy com-

prehending Macnooder's connection for the first time.

"I'm slightly interested, Blimmy," said Macnooder with a smile.

"And you think you've got a dog can lick Tough, do you?"

"My dear old boy, we don't *think*."

"Are you backing your opinion?" said Garret furiously.

"It's all over. We don't want to *steal* your money!"

"Will you bet?"

"Wait," said Macnooder, who made a gesture to the Tennessee Shad, who immediately produced a spade.

"What's that for?" said Skinner, mystified.

"To bury Tough," said Doc, with a bland gesture.

"Begin," said Blimmy, in a rage.

At this there was suddenly heard a noise among the trees, like an army of squirrels. A third of the audience, their courage departing, were now seen making their way along overhanging branches.

Skinner, more thoroughly frightened than ever

before in his life, remained alone in the middle of the ring, suddenly realizing the responsibilities as well as the glory of high office. Blimmy and Macnooder pushing the front of their boxes up to the ropes stood with their hands on the bolts.

"Stop!" cried the Tennessee Shad in a purposely tense voice. "Stop a moment."

"What's the matter?" cried a dozen alarmed voices.

"The Beefsteak must get out of the ring or I won't answer for the consequences."

At this another third of the audience took to shinnying up the most available trees, while the rest, including P. Lentz who couldn't, to have saved himself, lifted his two hundred pounds from the ground, began to cast calculating glances to the rear. The Beefsteak, without a pause, retired outside the ropes while the tree dwellers with returning interest began to shout:

"Even on Dynamite!"

"I'll back Macnooder's dog."

"Good-bye to Tough."

"Stuffed dog to-morrow!"

"Ten to one someone gets chewed."

"What show has a Beefsteak got?"

"Jemima, they're fierce!"

"Give us the carnage."

"Blood!"

"Are you ready?" cried the Beefsteak, in a high falsetto. "Let 'em out."

There was a volley of cheers from the trees and a unanimous rushing movement to the rear on the part of the remaining spectators, a flight conspicuously led by Macnooder and the Tennessee Shad, with well acted fright.

The shutters dropped simultaneously, but only Tough bounded forth in furious solitary possession of the ring. From the released cage of Dynamite nothing stirred.

Conflicting shouts now sounded from the trees.

"What's the matter?"

"Where's Dynamite?"

"Why doesn't he come out?"

"Just wait till he does."

"When he makes up his mind, look out."

"Rats, he's afraid!"

"Go on, give him time!"

A full minute passed and still the only occupant of the ring was Tough with four legs stiffly

planted, growling his defiance. From behind the tree trunks some of the most daring began to steal back to where the Beefsteak, puzzled, waited in suspense for the living destruction to burst forth.

Reassured, the crowd began to throng the ring-side, shouting:

"Come on, Dynamite!"

"Sic 'em!"

"Poke him up!"

"Shake him up!"

"Kick the box!"

Acting on the hint, the Beefsteak shook the box with a thundering boot. A furious snarling, which momentarily restored confidence answered him, but no Dynamite appeared.

"He's there all right!"

"What's the matter with him?"

"Hear him growl!"

"He's coming."

"The deuce he is!"

"He's gone to sleep."

"Where's the Tennessee Shad?" cried the Beefsteak.

The Tennessee Shad had disappeared.

"Where's Macnooder?"

The cry was taken up in vain. Suddenly the same suspicion seized the group of would-be sports, who rushing to the box, overturned it. At the same moment, Tough springing forward, came to a disgusted stop, more in sympathy than in anger, before an aged, moth-eaten, toothless dog, who, emerging in snarling protest, sank immediately to a reclining position. At once it was a riot.

"Why, he's a billion years old!"

"No teeth!"

"No eyes!"

"Hair dropping out!"

"Even Tough wouldn't bite it!"

"Jemima, if it isn't Old Sally!"

"Sure, it is!"

"Belongs to Laloo!"

"Why, she is thirty years old!"

"A grandmother!"

"It's a put up job!"

"Fraud!"

"Fake!"

"Skin game!"

"All bets off!"

"Murder!"

"Stop, thief!"

"Oh, what a bunco game!"

"Money back!"

"Give us our money back."

"Catch the Beefsteak."

"Hold him, boys!"

But that great sporting promoter, too amazed to think of flight, was gazing in dumbfounded horror at the blinking, ragged ænemic specimen which the Tennessee Shad had advertised as Dynamite.

"Hold up, I say, it's the Tennessee Shad," he cried vainly, "catch Macnooder and the Tennessee Shad — they've got the money!"

Then the mob reached him.

CHAPTER IX

THE LAMB RETREATS

Having found by successive disillusionizing experiments with the firm of Macnooder and the Tennessee Shad that the school was neither impressed by his own worldly personality or ready for the launching of genteel sporting practices, Montague fell into a period of abyssmal depression that was the more overwhelming in that he could see no guiding streak of light in the completeness of his darkness.

He had failed to impress. There was no doubt on that score. And as his moral education, by sharp processes, began to be accomplished, he himself began curiously enough, to lose the zest for the ways and distinction of complete manhood and to long wistfully, unbeknownst of his comrades, for the simple frolics of a mere boy.

The trouble was that he was always an outsider. He perceived it despairingly as he perceived the vital truth, that a night feast on in-

digestible tinned food and dyspeptic root beer was still a banquet and a banquet that needed no more fortunate patron.

When Turkey Reiter had indiscreetly informed him that his fatal drawback was the reputation for billions, he spoke the truth, and he might have added that every billionaire in such an assemblage is held to be impossible, dudified and deserving of hard labor, until he has removed the burden of suspicion.

Now the Uncooked Beefsteak could not comprehend this truth — he debated it, he meditated long thereupon in solitary tramps, he tried to comprehend it; but the traditions of his first sixteen years were too strong. It could not be so. It could not be that a generous open purse, a purse waiting to be called upon for the multifarious enjoyments of those he chose to signal out as his friends, could be a handicap. His theory could not be wrong, the blunder must have lain in indiscreet application. Some way there must be to win popularity and stop the humiliating and menial services to which he was daily condemned by his paternally solicitous housemates. For, unable to perceive the larger good, the Beefsteak

could see no useful purpose to be served in this course in primitive tailoring, complete housework, and general boot-blacking.

At times the House relented, hoping that the lesson had been learned. Unfortunately, Skinner could not seize the subtle class distinctions which forbade him, a mere bag of money, a noncombatant, what was permitted to the nobility of muscle and brain.

Of a consequence, no sooner was the ban lifted than he became familiar instead of humble, boastful instead of inquiring, pushing instead of thankfully receptive, and given to using nicknames, which were reserved for those who had progressed to the second degree. Upon which, the House would convene and agree that the Beefsteak was still unfit for human intercourse and assign him back to the boots and the clothes brush.

Now, in about the tenth period of this recurrent discipline, the Beefsteak had suddenly a brilliant idea. The Easter recess was approaching,— he would invite Macnooder to spend the week with him at his father's hotel and by dazzling him with its splendor and magnificence,

awaken him to a proper sense of the Skinner importance.

The result steadied him in his wavering belief in the theory of the supremacy of capital. Not only was there an instant somersault on Macnooder's part, a change accomplished between the blacking of one boot and the withdrawal of the other, but the effect in the House was electrical.

Half an hour after Macnooder had received the invitation, the Triumphant Egghead smilingly appeared in the Beefsteak's room, with a genial manner.

"Hello, Monte, old boy, not studying, are you?"

"Come in," said the Beefsteak, chuckling inwardly.

"What a perfectly corking room, a peacherino!" said the Egghead, surveying for the first times the walls decorated with photographs of certain theatrical ladies, who adorned but did not elevate the stage, and chromos of national bruisers in boxing tights.

"You like it?" said Skinner carelessly.

"And gee! Look at the Dottie-Dimple Toes!

Say, you don't know all these fairies, do you?"

"I'll put you next to any of them," said Skinner, relapsing into the past.

"Gee, I'd like to meet a real live actress," said the Triumphant Egghead, slyly approaching his opportunity.

At this moment the door opened and the Waladoo Bird came hastily in. The Triumphant Egghead shot him a furious glance which was returned by one of suspicion and envy.

Then the Waladoo Bird, giant of the football eleven, sat down and, smiling on Skinner, said with directness:

"Say, Monte, I've got to get a couple of suits bitten out for me in New York. You know the whole dressing game from A to Z. Give me a couple of pointers on what's the real thing. Look over my style of beauty and put me on. And say, what's the best hotel to stop at?"

The Waladoo Bird understood but one method of attack and that was a mass through the center of the line. But at this moment the door swung the third time and the Tennessee Shad entered, slightly out of breath, with a glance at the

two visitors that sought to seize on the instant if he had been forestalled. Close on his heels came Dennis de Brian de Boru Finnegan, who beat to the threshold the Gutter Pup and Lovely Mead.

That night the Uncooked Beeksteak, who had been watched since luncheon by those who were most concerned in watching one another, went off to sleep more thoroughly happy than he had been in months. He had played the trump card and the stakes were his. No more would he lighten the burdens of Klondike, the Ethiopian, no more would he bend in servile postures over the oozing muddy boots of striplings in knickerbockers, no more would he listen in enforced isolation to the whispered merriment of distant feasts; he would select with a ruthless and distinguishing finger his guests among the élite of his comrades; there should be a week of princely entertainment and then he would return, one of the chosen, a member of the crême de la crême.

At the same time Macnooder was saying excitedly to the Tennessee Shad.

"See here, I've got the inside track — the Beefsteak will invite anyone I say."

"Little social secretary, eh?"

"Shut up. Do you know what I'm going to do? I'm going to sell excursion tickets, good for one week at the Regal Hotel, all expenses paid, and I'm going to soak each gazebo ten fat young plunks."

"Doc, it's glorious," said the Tennessee Shad, "you certainly will own Fifth Avenue. But say how much longer do you think we can go on excavating in this here Beefsteak mine."

"Very, very little. That's why we'll play this for a lalapazooza!"

"The trouble is we have assumed a moral attitude towards Monte," said the Tennessee Shad regretfully. "We are loosening his gold rocks but we are educating him."

"Yes, and when we get him educated and a proper self-respecting citizen — he'll be ungrateful."

"I fear so — I fear me much."

"On to the Regal Hotel!"

"On, Doc, on!"

About three o'clock in the afternoon of the opening of the Easter vacation there debarked

at the Cortlandt Street terminal of the Pennsylvania Railroad a party of five in close marching order, consisting of Macnooder and Dennis de Brian de Boru Finnegan in advance, the Waladoo Bird and the Tennessee Shad supporting the center and the Triumphant Egghead guarding the rear.

"Halt," said Macnooder.

"What for?"

"We must consult. How shall we approach the Regal Hotel? On foot, in a swiftly moving trolley, or drawn by prancing horses?"

"Hire a hack, of course," said the Triumphant Egghead, who represented society. "You can't enter a hotel on foot."

"Why not?" said Finnegan.

"It isn't done."

"Rats, I'm for hoofing it. Show me the sights of Broadway and all that sort of thing."

"You're a hayseed and a jayhawker," said the Triumphant Egghead.

"Don't let's quarrel yet," said the Tennessee Shad soothingly, "I've only got sixty cents and I vote for the elevated."

"I think a barouche is an unnecessary ex-

pense," said Macnooder, who calculated on the Triumphant Egghead's buying the carriage.

At this moment the Waladoo Bird was discovered filling his pockets with peanuts.

"Merciful heavens," exclaimed the Egghead in horror. "You ignoramus, what are you doing?"

"Eating peanuts," said the Waladoo Bird, suiting the action to the word.

"Are you going through New York scattering shells like an Italian?"

"I am," said the Waladoo Bird who had the Western contempt for the abode of the unconvicted rich.

"I won't be seen with you."

"Don't."

"If he is determined," said Macnooder meditatively, "he had better work it off. Let's walk."

The Triumphant Egghead immediately engaged a coach and hid himself in the company of the Tennessee Shad, whose exertions were always mental.

The Waladoo Bird, flinging out peanut shells with the regularity of a thrashing machine, strode defiantly, flanked by Dennis, who stepped

from corner to corner to buy an extra, and Macnooder who showed a lively interest in the new attractions in the shop windows.

A matter of a block behind, at a patient walk, came the hired coach from the recesses of which the Triumphant Egghead gazed upon the offenders with wrath and disgust.

"I wonder what he thinks this Regal Hotel is?" he said furiously. "An actor's boarding house?"

"I know for a fact," said the Tennessee Shad to soothe and comfort him, "that the Waladoo Bird had only two dollars and thirty cents."

"Awful funny, ha! ha!" said the Egghead, who was in no mood for humor.

"He must get filled up sometime."

"If he don't, it's all off. Do you think I'm going to march into the foyer of the classiest thing in New York with an elephant ten feet high cracking peanuts?"

"How far is it uptown?"

"Five or six miles."

"He ought to get away with an awful lot of nuts by then," said the Shad, who began to share his anxiety. "So this hotel is rather flossy?"

"The flossiest."

"Lots of gilt and red plush and all that sort of thing."

"Sure."

"What's the fodder like?"

"The cuisine," said the Egghead elegantly, "is the most fashionable in the city."

"But the Beefsteak sets up for the grub?"

"Yes, you chump."

"Everything we get away with?"

"Sure."

"Perhaps if the Waladoo Bird knew that he would ease up."

The announcement, in fact, produced a decided sensation. The Waladoo Bird finished the last handful outside the carriage at the peremptory challenge of the Egghead and then jarred the carriage springs while Finnegan made the common demand for a show of speed.

When Montague Skinner, moving restlessly in the ante-room of the Regal Hotel, beheld the arrival of the overloaded coach, he was quite touched by the cordiality of the greeting he received.

"Leave it to me," he said, intervening be-

tween the reluctant purse of the Triumphant Egghead and the grinning coachman. Then with an ease that made the Waladoo Bird stiffen up and take notice, he summoned a footman and said, "Charles, see what the fare is and have the office attend to it."

"Here, I say!" began the Egghead, with not too much resistance.

"Oh! now, Monte, this is ours!" said Macnooder more emphatically as he perceived an absence of danger.

"No," said the Beefsteak finally, but with the lightness that such a triviality merited. "From now on you are my guests."

The Tennessee Shad, who had sixty cents, exchanged a glance of delirious joy with the Waladoo Bird who had a two-dollar bill, and, being thrown together in their voyage toward the elevator, whispered:

"It looks good to me."

"It certainly does."

"No expenses."

"None at all."

At this moment the Waladoo Bird was overwhelmed by a fearful thought.

"I say, he's got the bags."

"Who's got them?"

"The Buttons."

"Well, what of it?"

"We'll have to tip him."

"Well, tip him!"

"I've only got a two-dollar bill and a nickel," said the Waladoo Bird in a worried whisper.

The Tennessee Shad nervously shifted his sixty cents to an inner recess, maliciously enjoying the confusion of the giant, who was wondering uneasily whether the elevator man would expect to be recompensed.

Macnooder, Finnegan and the Triumphant Egghead were escorted to their quarters by Skinner after leaving the Waladoo Bird and the Tennessee Shad in the adjoining room assigned them.

The Buttons, having deposited the bags, was languidly busy straightening the window curtains and shifting the chairs with that perfect expectant manner that is instinctive with those whose fortunate mission in life is to be tipped.

"What'll I give him?" said the Waladoo Bird in a muffled roar.

"How do I know?"

"I can't give him a nickel."

"Never!"

"I say lend me a half a dollar."

"Can't, Macnooder's got my purse."

The Waladoo Bird, who had faced the Princeton Varsity without a tremor, quailed before the spruce representative of bell boys. For a moment his fingers hesitated over the plebeian nickel and then blushing with combined rage and embarrassment, he blurted out: "Here — take this."

And he thrust upon him the two dollar bill.

The Tennessee Shad, who had the profoundest respect for capital, was furious.

"You jackass, what did you do that for?"

"I had to give him something, didn't I?"

"Yes, but, Holy Cats, you can *buy* a bell boy for two dollars!"

"Well, what was I to do?" said the Waladoo Bird, who clutching his last nickel, began to feel the despairing loneliness of one who is stranded in the great city.

"Do, you blockhead? Ask him to get you some change."

"Ask him —" said the Waladoo Bird in stupid amazement. "Well, why in thunder didn't you tell me?"

"Humph! Thought you'd been weaned from the bottle," said the Tennessee Shad, who now felt a sense of personal loss.

"Well, by gravy, I'll do it now," said the Waladoo Bird, bolting into his coat.

"Hold up! What are you going to do?"

"I'm going to track that young highwayman down and shake it out of him!"

"Hold up! You can't do that."

"Can't I? Just watch me!"

"Hold up! You'll make a social blunder!"

"Beans!"

When the Triumphant Egghead with Macnooder and Finnegan entered the room they found the Tennessee Shad in an attitude of deep dejection with one ear trained for the outburst of an expected cyclone.

"What in blazes is the matter?" said Macnooder. "And where is the Waladoo Bird?"

The Tennessee Shad explained.

"My aunt's cat's pants, that is awful!" said the Triumphant Egghead, with a shiver.

"Wriggling snakes, what do you suppose he's doing?"

"He'll smash the crockery!"

"Had we better tell the Beefsteak?"

"Never!"

"Why the deuce didn't you look after him?"

"What do you expect?" said the Tennessee Shad aggrieved, "Do I look like a tug-of-war team?"

"This is awful," said the Triumphant Egghead, wiping his forehead.

The door opened, and the Waladoo Bird plumped in.

"Did you get him?" said the five in chorus.

"Get him?" said the Waladoo Bird in a rage. "Why, there are one hundred and fifty bell hops below, all hopping around, and every mother's son of them looks alike! Say, what color hair did that pirate of ours have?"

The Tennessee Shad promptly forgot.

"Look here, boy!" said the Triumphant Egghead. "This will never do. You'll queer the whole bunch."

"I gave him two dollars," said the Waladoo

"HOLD UP! WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO?"

Bird, sitting down with a crash that brought a groan from the light furniture.

"And don't go making a wood pile of everything you sit on!"

"What's wrong?"

"You. You're wrong. You're not fit to come into the parlor. A nice time we'll have with you. Didn't you ever see a hotel before?"

"Are you speaking to me?" said the Waladoo Bird, rising.

When the altercation had subsided, another serious question arose.

"Where'll we dine?" said Finnegan, who had been coached. "Supposin' we grub with the Beefsteak — private dining room, special dishes and all that sort of thing."

"I vote for down stairs," said the Waladoo Bird, who had been put in a contrary humor.

"Why?"

"I want to get a chance at a real bang-up menu."

"And I vote to put this guy in seclusion!"

The Waladoo Bird gave the Egghead an evil look and was about to reply when Macnooder suavely arose.

"The Waladoo Bird is quite right, we will dine in public."

"Everyone will be dressed to kill."

"Then we shall be taken for Western millionaires. But — I say, *but* — we are going to pull off this thing in classy style."

"No social blunders," said the Tennessee Shad.

"And no trying to split the menu," said the Triumphant Egghead.

"We will pick out the daintiest dishes," said Macnooder, trying the power of suggestion on the Waladoo Bird, "the *recherché,* expensive dishes, and we will take little careless dabs at them."

"Fine!" said the others, with the unique exception of the Waladoo Bird.

"To-morrow we'll rip the stuffing out of the bill of fare, we'll mangle it, we'll blow holes in it, tear it up the back and drive it to its corner!"

"To-morrow!"

"To-morrow! But to-night we'll go down in a bored sort of way. We'll put up an awful bluff, tired of caviar and nightingales' tongues and all that sort of thing. We've got to keep the

Beefsteak in his place — remember that! Show him we're old birds."

"Righto," said everyone; that is, everyone except the Waladoo Bird.

"Just take a nibble here and there and then push the plate away," said Finnegan, wishing to be helpful.

"Righto!"

"And stretch your arms and yawn in a high bred classy sort of way."

"You chump!" said the Triumphant Egghead. "Where have you been brought up?"

"The last suggestion is now withdrawn," said Finnegan modestly.

"Now, we're all agreed," said Macnooder, with an expanding smile. "Our object is to take the wind right out of the Beefsteak's sails — to show him what! Nothing but short sprints to-night, all long distance records postponed until to-morrow."

"All right!" said the majority, minus one.

The dinner passed without any exhibition of Gargantuan powers on the part of the Waladoo Bird, but this was due to no surrender to so-

cial prejudices, but to the fact that, placed as he was to command a view of the foyer, his whole attention was concentrated on the perplexing passage of flitting bell boys.

The Uncooked Beefsteak was slightly disappointed by the reticence of his guests, but this sentiment was soon lost in the blissful enjoyment of his new social footing. Nothing, in fact, could have been more delightfully intimate than their bearing towards him. He was not simply a patron,— he was one of them.

He took them to the theater, in a box, to a vaudeville performance over which a year ago he would have yawned himself weary. To his amazement, he found himself caught up in the general hilarity, wildly applauding slap-stick comedians that caused Dennis de Brian de Boru to weep for joy. He applauded! He had never done such a thing before. He actually stamped his feet and rattled his cane, demanding renewed encores. And when the show was over and the Tennessee Shad proposed that instead of dividing into two cabs, henceforth, whenever they went they should all crowd into one and send an empty cab before them as a sort of guard of

honor, he gleefully embraced the idea and balanced on the bony ridges of the Tennessee Shad, waving his hat to the crowds of Broadway with the zest of restored youth.

When, late at night, after the Waladoo Bird had consumed a terrifying number of oysters and Finnegan had eaten three welsh rabbits, Skinner had seen his guests to their rooms, he returned gorgeously to his private suite.

Bucks, the confidential valet, was in wait.

"How do Bucks? How are you?" he said languidly.

"Thank you, sir. It's good to see you back, sir."

"The old boarding-house is still doing a fat young business?" said Skinner, surrendering his coat and falling into the vernacular of the admired Turkey Reiter.

"I beg pardon, sir! Oh! Yes, sir," said Bucks, momentarily mystified. "I hope you enjoy the school, sir?"

"It is wonderful, Bucks, wonderful. Glorious times! Glorious fellows!"

"That Mr. Walader, sir, certainly is something of a man," said Bucks, with great respect.

"He could wipe the ground up with any cop in New York," said Skinner stoutly. "And at that you ought to see P. Lentz. He weighs two hundred and sixty."

Here the telephone began to buzz angrily

"Hello," said Skinner, going to it.

"Hello. Is that you, Monte, old boy?" said the excited voice of the Tennessee Shad.

"Yes, here I am."

"Say, look here, the Waladoo Bird has gone clean through his bed!"

"What?"

"Punctured a hole clean through it! Say, fix him up, will you? He's in mine now!"

"All right," said Skinner, who, turning from the telephone announced with pride, "What do you think of that? He's smashed the bed, Bucks — couldn't hold him! See to it, will you?"

"Yes, sir."

"Get something very solid."

"Yes, sir."

"One of those things they rig up for cattle kings."

"Certainly, sir."

When the noiseless valet had slipped away,

Skinner stood a moment in contemplation of the glorious feat.

"By George!" he exclaimed, "Won't old King Lentz be wild when he hears of it — he's only smashed a football. The Waladoo Bird is a wonder. By George, I never had a better time in my life! Gee, what a difference though it makes when you once get in!"

Then he sat down very seriously on the edge of his fragrant bed, staring at the toes that peeped forth from the gorgeous lavender silk pajamas.

"By George!" he said suddenly, with a great moral resolve. "I know what I'll do. I'll hire a tutor I will! I'll slave all summer. But I'll get to college with that bunch or I'll injure my health!"

When the stage had lumbered away after depositing the last returned convict, the inmates of the Dickinson House, exhausted and sleepless after that Easter period which the curriculum still persists in ascribing to rest and recuperation, foregathered once more on the steps and the young green banks in lively discussion.

The Uncooked Beefsteak from his room directly above, looked down with satisfaction, pausing in the process of arranging three new resplendent vests It had been a never-to-be-forgotten week. His hospitality had gone beyond the limits where even a prince might hesitate. If there was a dish on the Hotel Regal public menu that Finnegan, Macnooder and the Waladoo Bird had not contended with, it was solely because the season outlawed it. They had neglected not a single theater, riding to and fro always with an empty cab ahead as an outrider. The totalled record of meals consumed and carriages provided had made Skinner, pater, blink with amazement and there had been a few words on the subject, including a cash offer if the visit could possibly be abbreviated.

But this was pure inconsequential persiflage and had been silenced at once by the announcement of Montague's highly virtuous intention to secure a college education.

The Beefsteak, fondly secure of the affections of his late guests, brazenly deployed an array of theatric neckwear where it would most dazzle and astound.

Of course, he had that admiration for the

Waladoo Bird, that d'Artagnan entertained for Porthos, Dennis de Brian de Boru fascinated him and the Tennessee Shad moved him to envy with the dark and devious strategy of his mind. But, after all, it was Macnooder, the financier, and the Triumphant Egghead, the representative of society, who really stirred his heart strings, and they should be his special cronies, singled out from the multitude.

He finished the task of sorting his marvelous wardrobe, and yielding to an impulse, boldly arrayed himself in his latest tailored creation, a noticeable concoction in large brown and green squares. He surveyed with genteel pride the thin perfect line of the red silk necktie, passing his hand over the speckled vest with large white buttons. He liked to dress well, in perfect taste, yet with distinction, and now at last he dared gratify this taste.

Secure as a Braddock, in his complacent confidence, he went down the steps and burst in full vision upon the group.

"Well, old gazebos," said the Beefsteak, throwing back the sides of his coat, peacock fashion, "How do you like the spring styles?"

Turkey Reiter looked at Doc Macnooder and

sadly shook his head, while in the group an ominous silence began to spread.

The Uncooked Beefsteak, all unaware, sauntered down to a position beside the Triumphant Egghead and clapped him on the shoulder.

"Egghead, old sporting life, tell the multitude about the classy food I corralled for you."

Then spoke Turkey Reiter, the czar, solemnly:

"Beefsteak, there is a pair of old muddy boots, standing right in front of my washstand. The mud is rather hard and doesn't improve the boots a bit. Better go up now — quietly — and see what you can do with them."

"What!" said the Beefsteak, every hair of his head starting up with horror.

"Take great care of them," said Turkey Reiter softly. "They are my favorite boots."

"You don't mean it!" said the Beefsteak, turning desperately to Macnooder, "Oh, I say! not again!"

"It's for your own good, you blasted millionaire," said Macnooder sadly. "It hurts us more than it does you."

A great lump rose in the Beefsteak's throat. He turned wildly to the Triumphant Egghead.

"Yes, Macnooder is right," said this last hope. "We're really doing you good. So, Beefsteak when you finish the boots up nicely, come down on your tip-toes and brush up a few of my things. My clothes have been kept in such rattling good order lately that I should hate —"

But the Beefsteak zigzagging in his walk had wabbled up the steps. He went to his room and sat down, steadying his head in his hands. And there at last the full light broke over him.

That evening as the House was gathered for supper, Butcher Stevens suddenly exclaimed:

"For the love of Mike, look at the Uncooked Beefsteak!"

Around the corner came Skinner, clad in an ill-fitting pair of ink-stained corduroy trousers, a jersey in place of the loud vest and a slouch hat over his eye.

"Merciful heavens!" said the Triumphant Egghead, with a shock. "Beefsteak, where did you get that rig?"

"I traded it," said the Uncooked Beefsteak firmly. "Got it for my last $85.00 tailor suit."

"Dear boy, what does this mean!" said Macnooder, with a horrible misgiving.

"Read that!" said the Beefsteak, thrusting a paper on Turkey Reiter.

"What is it?"

"It's a telegram, I've just sent home. Go on, read it!"

And Turkey Reiter read:

Joshua M. Skinner,
The Regal Hotel,
New York City.
Cut my allowance to a dollar a week.
Montague.

"Explain!" said the Tennessee Shad heartbroken.

"I will," said the Beefsteak militantly. "It means I am on, I'm wise. It means you've educated me and I know my lesson. From now on the bank is suspended. I'll start even. And remember this," he added, looking steadily at Macnooder, "I may still be a Beefsteak, but there's nothing uncooked about me — I'm done to a crisp!"

CHAPTER X

LAST HISTORIC EXPLOIT OF THE FIRM

Say did you pass? Then set 'em up!
Good work, my brilliant brother.
Say, did you flunk? Then pass the cup!
Hard luck! Let's have another!
It heightens all the joys of Greek,
Soothes Mathematics' rigor,
In each event of life we seek
The ever-flowing jigger.

Refrain

The jig, jig, jigger,
The jig, jig, jigger,
The jig, jig, jigger, the jigger,
But we, when waves of trouble roll,
We hie us to the jigger.

"For Heaven's sake, shut up, Goat! You're 'way off the tune," said the Tennessee Shad irritably.

Now, the Goat knew he was not off the tune and, likewise, perfectly understood the cause of the irritation. Wallowing gorgeously on heaped-up sofa-cushions, breathing in the perfumed breeze at the open window, his chin in his hands, he looked down maliciously to where the Tennessee Shad, indolently on his back, retired under the brim of his sombrero, was nibbling at the pink-and-white petals that rocked languidly down. Then, with malice aforethought, the Goat's floating tenor resumed:

It cools in heat, it warms in cold,
If sick it can restore us,
And when our health becomes too good,
'Twill fix the matter for us;
So eat a plenty while you're small,
Eat more when you are bigger,
And lest we do not grow at all,
Let's take another jigger.

"Chorus now, Shad!"

The jig, jig, jigger,
The jig, jig, jigger,
The jig, jig, jigger, the jigger.
But we, when waves of trouble roll,
We hie us to the jigger.

Whereupon the Goat, seized with the idea, disappeared from the dormer window and presently shuffled out on the esplanade.

"They're fresh strawberry jiggers, Shad," he exclaimed tantalizingly; "for the first time too."

The Tennessee Shad snored loudly.

"Would you like me to set you up?" said the Goat, frisking as near as he dared. "Would you like to forget the past and have a jigger on me — would you, Shad? My hair's long and curly now."

The Tennessee Shad was too wary to be caught by any such hypothetical invitation to which he knew very well the answer to his answer; so he snored again, but keeping an eyelid batting on the chance that the Goat would venture too near.

"Strawberry jiggers, nice, fresh, creamy strawberry jiggers!" said his tormentor. "My! I'm going to eat a dozen. Sorry you don't care about 'em. Ta-ta!"

The Tennessee Shad opened one eye and watched the Goat go gamboling toward the village, as goats should go who are glad to be alive

in the best of all months, who have ravenous appetites and something jingling in their pockets to lay down on the counter.

The Tennessee Shad had all the requisites for perfect happiness except the last — there was nothing in his pockets to sound musically, not even one miserable nickel to strike against another. Not only was he devoid of credit, but, as the result of the education of Beefsteak, of the Criminal Club, and the search for German measles, he was not quite restored to that social standing which would warrant his approaching a past victim with the demand direct.

Despite these incontestable facts which should have allowed him to withdraw under the spell of his philosophy, one disturbing, buzzing little sound persistently and mockingly persecuted him:

"Fresh strawberry jiggers!"

Now, there are three great epochs in the annual of the school: the first appearance of the strawberry, the arrival of the raspberry, and that happy moment when the spoon plunges into the creamy jigger and strikes upon the juicy

shreds of the peach. And, the greatest of these is the inauguration of the strawberry season.

The Tennessee Shad drew in his cheeks and ran his tongue over his lips until he could bear it no longer. He sat up, blowing the sprinkled apple blossoms from his coat, and began to consider seriously.

"I must see Doc Macnooder," he said at length, after a vain examination of his own artifices. He stood himself up by a process of jerks and, acquiring sufficient momentum by his first movements, entered the House, bumped around the corners and rubbed his way to Macnooder's room, where he gave the agreed signal. No answer returning, he applied his eye to the keyhole, and then, chinning himself, surveyed by way of the transom the deserted bottles, the stuffed owl and the dangling dried bats.

"Doc must be in the village," he said. "If he is in funds I certainly ought to be good for a touch there."

For those who knew the Tennessee Shad his gait told all. When under the magic of a possibly productive idea he went rapidly in a beeline, his thin legs seeming to shut and close with

the agility of a tailor's shears. On the present occasion, being in a deeply-meditative mood, he went in little stumbling steps, often stopping to change his stride, scratching his head and, being lonely, altering his stride to kick along some stone larger than the rest.

In this mode he suddenly perceived the plump, Capuchin figure and round head of Doc Macnooder sauntering toward him, hands sunk in his pockets, his glance wandering in the clouds. At the same moment Macnooder perceived him and the following colloquy ensued:

"Hello, there."

"Hello, yourself."

"I was looking for you, Doc."

"I was trailing for you."

"'Em — you were?"

"I was."

"That means you are strapped."

"You don't mean to say you are?"

"Why, Doc, you're an old millionaire. I thought you —"

"My money's all tied up," said Macnooder. "Invested in stocks and that sort of thing."

"You were my last hope," said the Tennessee

Shad. "If the firm's bust what are we going to do about it? We've got to find something."

"Let's see what's doin' first," said Macnooder. "Let's reconnoiter."

"We might try Laloo," said the Tennessee Shad thoughtfully. "I gave him the idea of hot dogs. He's made thousands on it."

But as they approached, Laloo, basking lazily at the entrance of the frankfurter palace, shifted his toothpick and ominously drew out a little memorandum.

The two stopped.

"There's gratitude for you," said the Tennessee Shad bitterly.

"You should have struck a bargain with him," said Macnooder, the banker: "ten per cent and your personal account."

"Shall we try Appleby?" asked the Shad.

"What's the use?" replied Macnooder.

They proceeded up the leafy street to where, before the jigger shop, a score of ravenous boys were clinking their spoons against their glasses. In front a huge placard announced:

FRESH STRAWBERRY JIGGERS

"Let's work the Hickey Flimflam on the

bunch," said the Tennessee Shad, perceiving Turker Reiter, the Goat, Butcher Stevens and the Gutter Pup.

"All right — I'm desperate," said Macnooder under his breath; "but wait till Turkey Reiter clears out. He's on."

"Turkey's a square sport," said the Shad; "he wouldn't give it away."

They reached the crowd on the steps and saluted.

"Pretty good, eh?"

"You bet your sweet life!"

"Nothing like the strawberry, is there?"

"Um-um!"

"How's the supply hold out?"

"Say, Doc," said the Tennessee Shad, closing one eye and cocking his head toward the counter where Al's steely glance was turned upon them, "do you think, could you be persuaded — eh, what?"

"What, *again?*" cried Doc in simulated astonishment.

Al's eye opened and his finger stole softly across his politician's mustache, as he bent forward the better to listen.

"Oh, come on! There's always room for an-

other," said the Tennessee Shad. "Just to be sociable."

"Why, you old gormandizer!" said Macnooder. "You'll swell up and bust!"

"Then you won't?"

"You bet I won't!" said Macnooder, loosening his belt. "And you're a bigger fool than I took you for if you do. However, go ahead and commit suicide if you want!"

"Well, I guess I won't," said the Shad softly, slipping his belt to an easier hole and sitting down. "I just wanted to be sociable, that's all."

They ensconced themselves in the group, chatting aimlessly for a quarter of an hour, with surfeited unconsciousness of the melting jiggers that circulated beneath their noses.

Finally, it being his turn to treat, the Beefsteak, in fancied security, maliciously addressed Doc Macnooder.

"How about it, Doc?"

Macnooder emitted a long whistle and said indifferently: "I oughtn't to, but if the Shad will take one, too, I'll be sociable."

"Only a single, Doc," said the Tennessee Shad; "I couldn't eat any more — I couldn't."

The Beefsteak, who not for the world would have offered to treat had he believed them ravenous and destitute, once persuaded that further jiggers might be accompanied by physical pain and exertion, insisted maliciously.

"How about it, Shad?" said Doc. "Come along, be sociable."

The Tennessee Shad in turn drew a long breath.

"Oh, very well," he said, "but only a single."

Al, in the act of filling the glasses, stopped and looked long at the Tennessee Shad.

"Now, what's the game?" he said to himself.

The Tennessee Shad looked indifferently into the coveted glass, stirred the solitary jigger a little with the spoon, nibbled without appetite and relapsed into conversation.

"Say, Shad, I'd like to bet you couldn't eat six doubles," said Doc facetiously, winking at the Beefsteak.

The Tennessee Shad snorted.

"You don't want a cinch, do you?" he said crushingly.

Turkey Reiter stopped, caught Macnooder's eye, smiled reminiscently and nudged the Beefsteak.

"I thought you'd bet on anything," said the Beefsteak.

"So I will."

"Well, I'll bet you can't do it right now!"

"Eat six double jiggers?"

"That's what I say."

The Tennessee Shad jingled his keys in his trousers.

"Why don't you pick my pockets?"

"You're a quitter," said the Beefsteak, warming at the thought of the many old scores he had to wipe off. "I'll bet you half a dollar even you can't do it, and the loser pays for the jiggers right now. And if you don't take it up you're a paper-collared sport and a bluff."

"That's pretty strong talk, Shad!" said Macnooder.

"It's all very well for you to talk," said the Shad angrily. "This is one of your put-up games!"

The Beefsteak, egged on by Turkey, insultingly flashed the half-dollar under the Tennessee Shad's nose, exclaiming:

"Oh, you bluff, you cheap sport! Will you take me? Will you?"

"You be hanged!" said the Tennessee Shad wrathfully. "If there ever was a cheap sport, it's you. You never would bet unless you had a cinch. Well, I'll take you — on one condition."

"What?"

Doc and Turkey looked surprised, while Al at the counter, with his hand on the spigot, cocked his head slightly.

"That you make the same bet with Doc Macnooder."

Macnooder was on his feet protesting.

"Oh, I say, hold up. I'm not in this."

The crowd found against him.

"Hold up, there," said the Beefsteak, scratching his head. "That's a pretty big bet."

The Tennessee Shad saw the dawn of suspicion in the Beefsteak's eyes, and shifted his attack forthwith.

"Well, I'll make that bet myself," he exclaimed. "Who's the quitter now?"

The Beefsteak, reassured, stated the terms cautiously.

"Half a dollar even you can't eat six double jiggers —"

"Strawberry jiggers."

"Strawberry jiggers — in an hour."

"Let it go at an hour."

"Shake?"

"Shake!"

Then the Tennessee Shad turned aggressively on Doc Macnooder.

"Same thing goes with you?"

"Confound you!"

"Half a dollar even?"

"Well, yes."

"Shake?"

"Shake!"

"Al, serve 'em up!"

Then Doc and the Tennessee Shad, not too fast, but as with great physical effort, each ate six double jiggers.

The Beefsteak, whose hopes had been alternately raised and lowered with this comedy, paid sixty cents for the jiggers the Shad had consumed and sullenly tossed him the shining half-dollar. The Tennessee Shad, having lost to Macnooder, gravely transferred the coin, and Macnooder, rising, tendered it to Al, saying:

"I'm a dime short, Al — but that's the price of admission."

"Keep it, my boy," said Al enthusiastically, putting the half-dollar away from him. "Keep it; it's yours. I'd be ashamed to touch a penny of it."

Turkey Reiter solemnly offered his hand to the Tennessee Shad, saying:

"Old sporting print, I never saw it better done, not even by Hickey, God bless him!"

"Thank you!" said the Tennessee Shad. "Why, where is the Beefsteak?"

They crowded to the window and saw the Beefsteak, collar up, brim down, hands sunk in his pockets, deliberately tracking for home.

Half an hour later, the audience having shifted, they caught the Gutter Pup and repeated with equal success.

Arm-in-arm, fed to satiety, each with five nickels jingling in his pocket, Doc and the Tennessee Shad rolled hilariously back to the House.

"It was brilliant," said the Shad, thinking of future strawberry jiggers. "But it is limited, Doc. We were lucky to get the Gutter Pup."

"It leaves us about where we were."

"We've got to do something — something big — on a swipe scale!"

"We certainly have."

"You haven't anything up your sleeve?"

"Lots of 'em, Shad — but they're all on the flimflam order. This time we've got to produce some goods."

They proceeded, each searching inwardly until almost to the House. Suddenly from the north door Alcibiades, the waiter, with a splash of white linen over his arm, emerged and disappeared around the back. The Tennessee Shad stopped.

"Did you see him?"

"Who?"

"Doc, I've got an idea!"

"Fire away!"

"No — no," said the Tennessee Shad ruminatively, "not now, Doc; not just now. It needs thinking over. What time does it get dark?"

"Eight o'clock," said Macnooder mystified.

"Meet me at half-past eight, thirty feet behind the baseball cage — alone!"

The Tennessee Shad, on taking his seat at the table that night, fixed his gaze on Alcibiades, the waiter, in such a concentrated glare that that

menial, in his nervousness, violently did offense to Slush Randolph's ear with the platter of incoming sinkers.

"Confound you, Shad," said Slush, "quit rattling Alcibiades. What's wrong with him, anyhow?"

The Tennessee Shad stared haughtily at Slush and addressed Hungry Smeed.

"What do you know about him?"

"Who? Alcibiades?"

"Yes, what's his real name?"

"Finnigan — Patsy Finnigan," said Smeed, who didn't know.

"Correct. Now does anything strike you as peculiar about him?"

"Naw," said Hungry Smeed, annoyed at being delayed in his eating and watching Slush from the corner of his eye to make sure he didn't beat him to a second helping.

"Look again."

"He looks like a prize-fighter."

"Oh, you do see that, do you? Well, he was a prize-fighter."

At this startling announcement Slush, Butcher Stevens, the Triumphant Egghead and Hungry

Smeed raised their heads with a simultaneous jerk and gazed at the circling Alcibiades.

"Come off; he's too thin," said Butcher Stevens with a critical glance.

"Look at his jaw. Look at his bullet head. Look at those blood-shot eyes."

"Why, he's a feather!"

"Featherweight, that's it."

"Say, you old Tennessee Shad," said Butcher Stevens directly, "you know something. You've got something up your sleeve. Do you know he's a prize-fighter?"

"Well, supposin' I do?" said the Tennessee Shad.

"A prize-fighter!"

"It can't be true!"

"He does have the jaw."

"Shut up!" said the Tennessee Shad. "Do you want everyone to hear?"

"Say, Bub, what's doing?"

"I've got an idea," said the Shad with dignity, "a real imported, patent-applied-for idea, and I want you fellows to clear out and give me a chance. Mind, now, whatever you do, don't tell a soul what I told you!"

A moment later the astonished Alcibades received from the hands of the Tennessee Shad, accompanied by a terrific look of mystery, a covert scrawl with a whispered: "Read at once."

At half-past eight, while Doc Macnooder, lurking in the gloom behind the baseball cage, was straining eyes and ears for the approach of the Tennessee Shad, suddenly, from the ground in front of him, a thin, black silhouette sprang up.

"What's that?" cried Macnooder, bounding back.

"Sh! Doc, it's me," said the familiar nasal voice of the Tennessee Shad.

"Confound you! What do you mean by sneaking in on me like that?"

"Hush — I had to be sure you weren't a spy," said the Tennessee Shad, grasping his arm. "No one must know our errand here!"..

"Well, what the deuce is our errand?"

"We are waiting for someone," said the Tennessee Shad mysteriously. "Sit quietly now and keep your fingers crossed, for if we pull this off, Doc Macnooder, we're going to buy a safe to stuff our spondulix in."

"Pull off what?"

"Silence!"

After ten minutes' tense breathing suddenly the Tennessee Shad spoke:

"Doc?"

"Yes."

"Do you hear anything?"

"Not a sound."

"Well, I do — pebbles crunching over there. Now, look!"

"Where?"

"To your right, squint down along the fence, just past where the moonlight hits the second tree. See?"

"There's someone coming."

"Hush!"

Presently the Tennessee Shad sent forth a cautious whistle. The approaching figure loomed larger, stopped, advanced, stopped and looked about defensively.

"He's carrying a stick," said Macnooder.

"It's all right," said the Tennessee Shad, rising. "We'll go to meet him."

Advancing rapidly, he exclaimed:

"Mr. Finnigan, shake hands with Mr. Macnooder. Doc, shake hands with Mr. Finnigan."

"Why, it's Alcibiades!" exclaimed Macnooder.

"Of course it is," said the Tennessee Shad. "Come, Finnigan, we're not safe here. Come quickly. Follow me."

"Where you takin' me?" said Alcibiades, planting the stick in front of him.

"Down by the pond in the woods where no one'll hear us."

"Thanks, but I'll stay here."

"Shucks, Alcibiades," said the Tennessee Shad soothingly. "All we want is to put a little sporting proposition to you."

"Well, you can put it here."

"Don't you trust us?"

"No, you young devils; you bet I don't. If you've got anything to say, say it or I'm going back."

The Tennessee Shad consulted with Macnooder and, taking a step toward Alcibiades, said firmly:

"Finnigan, you're a prize-fighter!"

"Huh?"

"You're an ex-prize-fighter!"

"What's that got to do with it?"

"Are you?"

Alcibiades scratched his head and considered.

"And what then?" he said cautiously. "What's the answer?"

"I knew it!" said the Tennessee Shad joyfully. "Finnigan, give me your hand. I'm proud to shake it!"

The startled Alcibiades then suffered his right hand to be enthusiastically pumped by Macnooder, but kept with his left a convulsive grasp on the stick.

"Now, Finnigan," said the Tennessee Shad professionally, "here's the point. What would you say to putting on the mitts just once more?"

"No, you don't!" exclaimed the little Irishman, springing back.

Macnooder and the Tennessee Shad gazed in astonishment.

"What the deuce is the matter with him Doc?"

"Guess he thinks we want to kidnap him and make him fight Turkey or Butcher."

"Don't be a fool, Alcibiades," said the Tennessee Shad sharply. "None of us wants to fight you."

"Well, what do you want, then?" said Alcibiades, still on the defensive.

"Do you know any of the profession down in Trenton?"

"In Trenton?"

"Yes. Could you get anyone from there to come up and go a mill with you?"

"Could I? You want *me* to find some one?"

"That's it. Do you know anyone there?"

"Oh, yes! Sure, I know a lot of men there. But what do I want to be puttin' on the gloves for, anyway?"

"Why, we put up a purse, of course."

"Well, now, why in the devil didn't you begin with that?" said Finnigan, dropping the stick. "That's talkin'. Sure I mistrusted you were tryin' to play a trick on me."

"So you think you could make a match, Finnigan?"

"Maybe so, maybe. I'm running into Trenton to-morrow morning. I might look around

a bit. It all depends on the purse, you know. Now, what might be your idea on that?"

Macnooder and the Tennessee Shad withdrew and whispered. Macnooder, as the man of affairs, continued the operations.

"Well, now, Finnigan, what would you say was a fair proposition? Come, now, speak right up!"

"For how long a fight?"

"Oh, fifteen good slashing rounds. Come, now, what would you say?"

"Well, I don't know what I'd say."

"How about fifteen dollars — dollar a round?"

"Sure you young bloods can do better than that."

"Well, twenty-five dollars — lump."

"There's the expenses from Trenton?"

"Five dollars more for the rig. Is it a go?"

"Well, I'll have to see a bit."

"Fix it up for to-morrow night if you can, and have your man here on the stroke of midnight."

"Well, I'll see what I can do."

"Twenty-five-dollar purse, five for the rig and

fifteen good slashing rounds. That's the terms. All right? Put it here!"

The Tennessee Shad and Macnooder, having watched Alcibiades flit back into the far shadow of the Upper, withdrew to the secret banks of the pond, where the lugubrious moon fell in a shining splash amid the massy reflections of the wood.

"Shad," said Macnooder, breaking the silence, "this is a wonder. It is beautiful. I really am touched. As a bonanza investment it takes me back to the late lamented Hickey and his no-guarantee silver-gilt clappers."

"Let's reckon up," said the Tennessee Shad professionally. "First, expense account. Purse and rig from Trenton, thirty dollars. Hiring of baseball cage, nothing. Advertising, nothing. Bribing of police, nothing. Subsidizing press, nothing. Can you think of anything else?"

"I can't."

"Total expenses — thirty dollars. Now for the rub. What'll we make the admission — one plunk?"

"Two."

"That's pretty stiff."

"We'll make that for reserved seats, front row. Just before the fight we can issue ordinary admissions at one bone."

"Cash?"

"Absolutely."

"Now, Doc," said the Tennessee Shad seriously, "we must look at all sides of this, and there's one snag and it's a big one."

"Which one?"

"Our past reputations."

"Um!"

"The Egghead's sore on me because that haircut before the Prom queered him with his girl, and the Gutter Pup for several reasons, but principally for my leading him into mumps instead of German measles. He had 'em bad, Doc, very bad."

"Well, I suppose we'd better cut 'em out, then?"

"On the contrary, don't you see, they're the only ones can help us to general confidence."

"I know it's a good one," said Macnooder somewhat puzzled, "but it hasn't quite got to me yet. How the deuce are you going to get

those two yaps who are gunning for you to help you inspire general confidence?"

"I'm going to make them my officials — Gutter Pup shall be referee, and the Triumphant Egghead timekeeper."

"I see," said Macnooder enthusiastically; "salve them over with a few plunks apiece"

"Doc," said the Tennessee Shad from the heights of a loftier genius, "you are really only fit to be a money-changer and a pawnbroker. When will you rise to the truths of high finance?"

"I am humbly listening," said Doc. "What is it?"

"I am not going to do anything so low-down, easy and commonplace as to pay them to do what I've got to have done."

"No?"

"No! I'm going to make the Gutter Pup and the Triumphant Egghead give me the sanction of their re-spec-ta-ble names and I'm going to make 'em *pay me for doing it.*"

Doc Macnooder humbly knelt and struck the ground with his forehead.

"Oh, wonderful Tennessee Shad! When you

get into business let me be your office-boy?"

"That's already promised," said the Tennessee Shad, pleased. "Turkey Reiter has the call. And now to biz. I let off a bit at the dinner table about Alcibiades being a prize-fighter and told the boys not to breathe a word; so, by this time, it ought to be all over the Upper. The Gutter Pup'll be primed. Let's swoop down on him."

"If we pull this off," said Macnooder sadly "it'll be just about the last, Shad."

"Alas!"

"They'll never stand for another deal from us!"

"They've stood for a good many."

"Shad, here ends the firm of Macnooder and the Tennessee Shad."

"Perhaps, but Doc this is the great and only Lalapazazza. We may go down, but it'll be with the band playing and the dear girls strewing flowers!"

"Say, what are we going to call Alcibiades?"

The Tennessee Shad paused and reflected.

"Patsy, the Brute."

"Then he ought to pad," said Doc doubtfully. "He looks more like chills and fever."

"Good idea. I'll see to that. The other fellow is the Trenton Terror."

The Tennessee Shad, accompanied by Doc, rapped softly and stole in as innocently as Br'er Rabbit. The Gutter Pup, alone, intrenched behind a desk, lifted the green shade from his eyes and looked at the intruder deliberately, with an appetizing, fox-eyed glance.

"Hello, you old Gutter Pup!" said the Tennessee Shad in a friendly way, while Doc slid to a seat. "Am I welcome?"

"You are not! Get out of here!"

"Does that little jigger episode rankle?" said the Shad, sidling forward. "Because I've come to pay you back."

"What!" said Gutter Pup, startled from his attitude."

"I've come to pay you back," said the Shad, jingling the three remaining nickels to sound like a pocketful; "that is, if — if you think it wasn't a square catch."

"Humph — that's the string to it."

"No, no, I'm serious. I want to be fair and

above-board. If you think — well, what do you think?"

"Oh, you caught me all right."

"I'll tell you what I'll do," said the Tennessee Shad suddenly; "I'll help you to work it on Lovely Mead or the Egghead. I'll square it that way. What do you say? It certainly would be a corking sell on Lovely!"

At this astute appeal to frail human nature the Gutter Pup's scowl of vanity gave place to a smile at the soothing thought of leading his dearest chum into the same trap into which he had fallen.

"Let her go at that."

"Good," said the Tennessee Shad, extending his hand. "No hard feelings. Gutter Pup, you're the sport of the bunch. Shake."

The Gutter Pup shook hands gravely.

"Now, Gutter Pup, we want your advice," said the Shad cheerily. "I've got an idea."

"No," said the Gutter Pup firmly.

"It's a beautiful idea."

"Never again!"

"Just hear it!"

"No and no!"

"What! Haven't you any curiosity?"

"I haven't!"

"But, Gutter Pup—"

"Not a word."

"It's just this—"

The Gutter Pup sealed his ears with his fingers and looked stonily at the Shad. The Shad looked at Macnooder, shrugged his shoulders and made a sign of capitulation. The Gutter Pup disdainfully maintained his attitude. The Tennessee Shad sat down, picked up a paper-cutter and gazed at it with such set melancholy that, from sheer curiosity, the Gutter Pup released his ears.

"Gutter Pup," said the Shad pathetically, "do you realize that your conduct hurts me?"

"Glad of it."

"Do you realize that in a short month all we old friends are going away from here to part forever? Can't you understand that your conduct and Egghead's and all the rest hurts me and makes me feel bad? Don't you realize that I want to do something to wipe out the past and win back the friends, the good old friends again?"

"Yes, you do!"

"Yes, Gutter Pup, I do — I feel lonely. I want to be restored to the old feeling of confidence."

"Mumps!" said the Gutter Pup, blushing a little.

"That's just it," said the Shad instantly. "I wanted you to say that! That's just what makes me feel bad. I want to make amends; to give you fellows something that'll wipe off the slate. Now, my little idea."

Up went the Gutter Pup's fingers again. The Tennessee Shad looked very sad, sighed, rose and offered his hand in farewell.

The Gutter Pup, smiling scornfully, extended his.

"It was only a prize-fight," said the Tennessee Shad hurriedly, clutching the hand in both of his. "Never mind. Good-by! Come on, Doc."

He went toward the door; Doc did not rise.

"Hold up!" said the Gutter Pup.

"Well?"

"You said prize-fight?"

"I did."

"What do you mean by that?"

"I meant a crocheting sociable, of course," said the Tennessee Shad. "That's what is always meant by prize-fight! Well, good-by."

"Wait a moment now; don't be so thundering touchy."

"I am touchy."

"Rats! can't you take a joke?"

"Not some jokes. Come on, Doc."

"Look here, Shad," said the Gutter Pup, slipping past him and locking the door. "Say, I take it back. Go on, now, let me in on this. Who's the scrap between?"

The Tennessee Shad stared at Doc and then at the Gutter Pup.

"I said nothing about an amateur boxing exhibition"

"What do you mean?"

"I'm talking about a really professional prize-fight."

"A prize-fight between professionals — real professionals?"

"Exactly that."

"Then it's straight about Alcibiades?"

"Who told you?" cried Macnooder and the Tennessee Shad in simulated anger.

"No matter," said the Gutter Pup hastily. "I promised not to tell."

"Well, it is true," said the Tennessee Shad. "His real name is Patsy the Brute, and Doc and I have matched him to go fifteen rounds against a bruiser we're smuggling up here called the Trenton Terror. Now ask me to sit down, and put a soft cushion behind my back!"

The Gutter Pup, rendered weak by emotion, grabbed the Tennessee Shad's arm and clung to him. In his underform years, (as has been related), the Gutter Pup had fought battles galore for the pure love of battling, and was now the President of the Sporting Club (*vice* Hickey once removed), an organization devoted to the scientific healing of animosities without recourse to debasing exhibitions of billingsgate. Likewise the Gutter Pup possessed on his wall, as the proudest ornament of the school, a signed photograph of John L. Sullivan. For all which reasons his clutch tightened as though he were afraid the Tennessee Shad would slip away through the transom.

"Oh, Shad, do you mean it?" he said at last.

"I'm telling you."

"But how are you going to get them?"

"Of course, we've got to raise a stiff purse," said the Tennessee Shad as an opening wedge, and then, observing the Gutter Pup thoughtfully replacing the key in the lock, he added: "but that's not what we came about."

"What then?" said the Gutter Pup, looking at him long and critically.

"We want your advice as the leading sporting authority in the school," said the Shad solemnly. "It's all a question of the referee. Doc's for Butcher Stevens and I'm for Turkey Reiter; what do you think?"

"Why not me?" said the Gutter Pup instantly.

Macnooder looked profoundly at the battling photograph of John L. reposing on the American flag — profoundly, with a concentrated glare. The Tennessee Shad climbed to his familiar roost on the back of the chair and replied with embarrassed reluctance:

"Gutter Pup, I wish we could offer it to you. You really know more about such things than any of us. You're really it. I wouldn't hurt your feelings for the world; that's why I want

you to understand our reasons before we ask anyone else."

"I don't see," began the Gutter Pup, cut to the heart.

"Now, let me put the case before you. We've got to pony up a stiff purse. You know professionals and you understand. If we could let the whole school in, why, we'd have no trouble. We can't. This thing's got to be pulled off with terrific secrecy at midnight, down in the baseball cage. At most, we can't let in more than thirty or forty fellows. So the only way is to give the prime jobs to the fellows who'll put up for them. There you have it. Turkey and Butcher will uncork like a flash at the chance. Gee, who wouldn't? Do you see, Gutter Pup? You'll understand, won't you? You won't take it hard. We'll leave it all to you. Which one — Turkey or the Butcher?"

"I suppose you'd want a stiff contribution," said the Gutter Pup, his appetite in his eye.

"Pretty stiff," said the Shad with charming frankness.

"I could put up a fiver."

"I'm afraid that wouldn't do," said the Ten-

nessee Shad sadly. "Don't think about it any more. Besides, we've got to have some bruiser like Turkey to keep things in order."

"Shad," said the Gutter Pup, now almost tearfully, "haven't I always kept things in order at the Sporting Club? Now, look here: Turkey's a mutt, and the Butcher — well, you simply can't invite a couple of real professionals unless you give 'em a referee who knows the rules; you simply can't."

"But what are we going to do?"

"See here," said the Gutter Pup desperately. "Make it eight! I'll borrow another three somewhere and somehow."

"We rather counted on more," said the Tennessee Shad doubtfully. "What do you say, Doc?"

"Pretty cheap, Shad. Think of the glory of it!"

"I tell you how it might be done," said the Tennessee Shad thoughtfully. "If we could get someone to put up ten for timekeeper——"

"Leave that to me," exclaimed the Gutter Pup, grasping at the straw. "I've got just

your man — Goat Finney. His father's a billionaire."

"I wonder if the Triumphant Egghead would put up five to be one of the seconds?" said the Tennessee Shad.

"Let me see him!" said the Gutter Pup enthusiastically. "Give me the chance."

"Well, on these conditions I am willing," said the Tennessee Shad after sufficient deliberation. "If you can raise more, why, do it. How about it, Doc?"

"We always did want Gutter Pup to referee, you know."

"Get at it quick," said the Tennessee Shad, rising.

"You bet I will!"

"Cash," said Macnooder warningly. "Paid in five hours before the fight."

The Gutter Pup departed running.

At half-past ten that night, at the Tennessee Shad's dictation, Doc Macnooder entered in the joint account-book the following items:

Goat Finney, for holding the stopwatch..$10.00
The Triumphant Egghead, for being permitted to rub down the Trenton Terror. 5.65

Turkey Reiter, for being permitted to rub down the Trenton Terror 5.00

The Beefsteak, for the privilege of sponging off Patsy, the Brute 3.75

Tough McCarthy, for the privilege of sponging off Patsy, the Brute 3.00

Slush Randolph, for the right to supply the sponges 2.50

Gutter Pup, for refereeing and procuring the above officials 8.00

Under cover of these confidence-inspiring names, Macnooder and the Tennessee Shad sold their tickets rapidly without a hitch, no questions asked.

At twelve o'clock the next day Alcibiades slipped the Tennessee Shad a note confirming the arrangements and guaranteeing the arrival of a local bruiser that night.

At seven o'clock each official eagerly presented himself in the Tennessee Shad's room and made cash payments. Meanwhile, the subscribers for reserved seats were receiving from Doc Macnooder, in exchange for two dollars, a green ticket inscribed:

LAST HISTORIC EXPLOIT OF THE FIRM

RESERVED SEAT

Doc Macnooder and the Tennessee Shad Offer

THE TRENTON TERROR

vs.

PATSY THE BRUTE

For the Professional Feather-weight Championship of Mercer County, in Fifteen Slashing, Terrific Rounds

Under the Auspices of the Sporting Club

Present Ticket at 11:45 *at*

Baseball Cage

$2.00

At ten o'clock a supplementary issue of one-dollar, general-admission tickets, open to all comers and presentable at 12:10, was eagerly snatched up.

At half-past eleven the Tennessee Shad and Doc Macnooder, armed with Legs Brownell's bullseye lantern, stole down by the pond to meet Patsy the Brute and the Trenton Terror. They found them side by side, amicably reclining under a tree, puffing vigorously on ill-smelling cigars. Doc Macnooder turned the lantern on the new arrival; the scrutiny was not favorable.

"Are you a prize-fighter?" he said, discouraged.

"Why not?"

"You don't look it."

"I'm a better man than this fellow."

"Remember, they're featherweights, Doc," said the Shad.

"Well, give us the goods," said Macnooder. "Fight like demons. We want fifteen slashing rounds!"

"All right, boss."

"You're the Trenton Terror."

"That suits me."

"And, Alcibiades, you're Patsy the Brute."

"That's fierce enough. Where's the coin?"

"You'll get that in the cage."

"No, you don't — we get it now."

"Don't you trust us?"

"I'd rather feel the coin."

The Tennessee Shad consulted with Macnooder, and Doc paid over thirty dollars and stationed himself so as to command the retreat of the Trenton Terror. On the stroke of twelve they stole up to the cage and entered by the back,

by means of three large boards prudently loosened for the occasion, to secure a retreat.

The ring was already roped off. Four dim lanterns at the corners lighted up the white sweaters and ratlike eyes of the silent, breathless crowd. Above, a swallow or two, disturbed by the unusual spectacle was frantically scurrying among the rafters. At moments the door opened and a whispered recognition was heard.

Macnooder presented the combatants to the Gutter Pup and sent them to their corners to strip for action.

Murmurs of surprise began to rise from the amateurs as the ribs and collar-bones of Patsy the Brute appeared from under the red flannels.

"Gee, he's thinner than the Shad!"

"He's wasted away."

"I don't bet on that guy."

"He must be awfully scientific."

"His blows wouldn't annoy a fly."

"Me for the Trenton Terror."

But at this moment the upper anatomy of the visitor was disclosed.

"Lord, he's thinner still!"

"I can look right through him."

"He looks more like a professor of chemistry."

"How many ribs can you count?"

"Featherweight? Paperweight, you mean!"

The Tennessee Shad, prepared for such criticism, advanced swiftly to the middle of the ring and help up his hand.

"Ladies and gentlemen, before opening the festivities to-night I desire to say a few words in explanation. We are placing before you to-night, at much expense and great personal danger, one of the most unique, I may say *the* most unique, *bona-fide,* high-class professional exhibition in the history of the school. I will say, for the benefit of a few experts on baby carriages and tiddledywinks who seem to be unusually vociferous to-night, that these gentlemen are not bloated middleweights. They are featherweights; each man is trained to the second; there is not an ounce of superfluous flesh on their bones. Each man is a streak of lightning, with muscles like whipcords, skilled in every trick and artifice of the game. We have tried to put before you not a lumbering exhibition of fatty degeneration, but a sizzling, rearing, tearing spectacle of

fast, furious and sanguinary fighting. Are there any criticisms of the management?"

There were none.

Macnooder arose and made a sign to the seconds, and the contestants lumbered forward, Alcibiades girt with the school colors, his antagonist decorated about the waist with a blue-and-white pennant loaned by the Duke of Bilgewater.

"The contestants to-night," continued Macnooder in singsong, "are, on my right, Patsy the Brute, who will uphold the red and black; on my left, the Trenton Terror. Both men have ferocious reputations. In explanation I would say, in confidence, that Patsy's retirement from the professional ring was simply due to his having accidentally killed a man by a terrific wallop on the solar plexus, an accident which he profoundly regrets. The contestants are old enemies, they have already met three times in three bruising contests, and they do not want to conceal that this is a fight for blood! At their personal request the rules will be stretched so as to permit of the most deadly slaughter. The presence of our well-known sporting authority, the

Gutter Pup, as referee, will, however, be a guaranty that this fight, though slashing, will be absolutely square and aboveboard! Rounds, three minutes each — one minute interim. Everyone be seated!"

The Gutter Pup whispered a moment to the contestants and then sprang back, crying:

"Time."

The Trenton Terror and Patsy the Brute stood confronting each other, visibly embarrassed.

"Make 'em shake hands, Gutter Pup," said the Tennessee Shad quickly.

"Did you see that?" said Doc Macnooder, on the other side. "They didn't want to shake hands. Gee, but they've got it in for each other."

The first round was not exactly thrilling.

"The light and the ground bother 'em," said Macnooder. "Just wait till they get their bearings."

"Funniest style I ever saw."

"Why, they hold their fists down by their knees."

"Featherweights always have styles of their own."

"Don't see how they can strike from there."

"They're quicker than others. You'll see all right."

Round number two passed like the first.

"When are they going to begin?" said a voice.

"Push 'em together."

"Tie 'em together."

"They're sizing each other up," said Macnooder loudly; "planning out the campaign."

In round three their gloves met twice.

"Each is afraid of the other's wallop," said Macnooder more loudly. "One blow'll decide it. Great foot-work, wasn't it?"

Suddenly in round four, just as a few polite blows had been struck, a hoarse voice at the back whispered:

"Cheese it!"

Instantly the cage was plunged in darkness, while a confused murmur rose.

"It's the Doctor."

"We're trapped."

"We'll all be fired!"

"Let's get out."

"Silence!"

"Shut up, everycne. The Shad's gone to reconnoiter."

Presently the Shad's voice was heard:

"Light up, there isn't a mouse stirring."

The lanterns flickered up again.

"Who yelled 'Cheese it'?" said Turkey angrily.

Everyone stood up and looked about.

"If anyone's afraid he can get out now quick," said the Gutter Pup. "We don't want to cheat the cradle."

Strangely enough no one availed himself of the opportunity.

Round four being resumed ended with the professionals clinched desperately. Then another delay arose. The contestants refused to fight unless the hat was passed for additional contributions. Macnooder calmed the angry crowd by explaining that the ground was so rough and the light so bad that the Trenton Terror was really running the risk of twisting his ankle. The hat showing only five dollars and twenty cents, the management was forced to add five dollars more before the fighters consented to go on. Macnooder having taken the precaution to hold up the

bonus until one good round had been fought, the hopes of the whole company were raised by a few resounding thumps, accompanied by a great amount of prancing about the ring.

Toward the end of round seven, again the sepulchral voice was heard.

"Hi! Cheese it!"

Again every light was doused, while everyone waited with calculated breath. Again the Tennessee Shad slipped out by the back, reconnoitered and angrily returned. This time everyone, slightly unnerved, made a determined search for the alarmist, accompanied by such inviting requests to show himself that it was no wonder the search was unproductive. They returned to the ring.

"This is getting on my nerves," said Goat Finney, blowing on his fingers.

"Wish the deuce it was over."

"The Doctor'll be sure to hear of it."

"Course he will."

"He always does."

"Why don't they hurry up?"

The next round, as the result of another strike, the hat was passed again. In round nine

another alarm arose with another fruitless search for the disturber. By this time the feeling of panic was becoming epidemic.

At the end of round ten an angry consultation took place in the middle of the ring. The Trenton Terror positively refused to continue unless the stakes were increased. Macnooder addressed the turbulent meeting:

"Say, fellows, a word, one word, please. This is the situation. This fight is illegal. You don't realize that. If the police get the tip we might be jugged for a year. These continued fake scares are getting on the nerves of these gentlemen, naturally. They're the ones who're taking the risk and they feel they ought to be paid more for it. Now I'll leave it to you. Shall we pass the hat again or call it off now?"

At once a discussion broke out.

"No, no!"

"We want our money's worth."

"Do you call this a fight?"

"Gee, I've had enough."

"Call it off."

"Nothing of the sort."

"Go on."

"No baby act."

"Pass the hat."

The mysterious possibility of prison gave a thrill to the imagination that lifted the tame contest into the realm of the heroic. The Gutter Pup passed the hat.

Meanwhile, the Tennessee Shad and Macnooder were solemnly consulting.

"Gee, Doc, if this goes on another five minutes where'll our profits be?"

"I know it."

"Each time it hits us harder."

"Well, what are you going to do about it?"

"Lord, if the Doctor would only come, Macnooder," said the Tennessee Shad in a solemn whisper, "he *must* come!"

The pair exchanged a deep, silent glance of comprehension. The Tennessee Shad smiled and disappeared carefully in the direction of the safety exit.

The collection was announced at three dollars and sixty cents. Public opinion forced from the ruthful Macnooder the disbursement of a sufficient sum to make up the stipulated ten dollars. Round eleven began with threats from all

quarters directed against the management and the fighters.

Suddenly, outside, the gravel crunched under a firm tread and three startling knocks fell on the door. Everywhere the whisper went up:

"The Doctor!"

"Police!"

"Douse the lights!"

"Through the back, you chumps."

"Hurry!"

In less than a minute, amid a scurrying of frantic figures racing for the woods, the last vestige of the furious and terrific professional prize-fight had vanished.

. . . . . .

The next afternoon, ensconced in the jigger shop, Turkey Reiter, the Gutter Pup and the Triumphant Egghead considered the reckoning of the night before.

"I'm out ten plunks," said the Egghead. "I got reckless when they passed the hat. How did you make out?"

"I'd hate to tell," said the Gutter Pup.

"Funny the Doctor didn't refer to it in chapel."

"Say, that was queer."

"What was the fight like?" said Al, who had listened.

"Frightful," said Turkey Reiter; "there was bad blood between them!"

"How long did it go?"

"Ten slashing rounds."

At this moment the Triumphant Egghead, looking out the window, exclaimed:

"Hello!"

"What's the matter?"

"There they are!"

On the opposite sidewalk Alcibiades and the Trenton Terror were sauntering affably together.

"Is that what you call Patsy the Brute and the Trenton Terror?" said Al dreamily.

"Sure."

"Was this one of the Tennessee Shad's little parties?"

"Why, yes."

"Doc Macnooder, too?"

"Yes, he was in it."

"Hem," said Al thoughtfully; "I see where two back accounts get paid up."

"Al," cried the Gutter Pup, "what do you know? Do you know those fellows?"

"The Finnigan brothers? Rather — used to steal watermelons together."

"Brothers!" said the Gutter Pup with a gasp.

"Brothers!" said the Triumphant Egghead.

"Brothers!" said Turkey Reiter.

"But, Al, they *are* prize-fighters, now, aren't they?" said the Gutter Pup desperately.

"Well, they have done a good deal of boxing," said Al, polishing the faucets.

"Ah, they have done that?"

"Oh, yes, down at Katzenbach's grocery. They used to box lemons."

. . . . . .

The Gutter Pup, Turkey Reiter, Goat Finney, the Beefsteak and the Triumphant Egghead, sat on the steps of the Esplanade nursing their feelings and their pocketbooks. Boys with tongues in their cheeks looked at them as they passed, and snickered at a good safe distance. Others shouted to them, joyful insulting gibes.

Presently the Tennessee Shad and Doc Macnooder loped up in a friendly manner and stood looking down at them.

"Hello, Turkey!" said the Shad hopefully.

Turkey's gaze remained set.

"Hello, Lovely!"

Lovely drew a breath and looked down.

"Aren't you going to say howdy?" pleaded the Tennessee Shad, "Egghead — Gutter Pup — oh, Gutter Pup?"

The Gutter Pup's lips moved and set again, while Macnooder was observed departing on tiptoes.

"I suppose you're sore on me," said the Tennessee Shad sadly. "Well, I don't blame you. I'll never forgive myself — never!"

He sat down opposite, took a handful of stones. juggled them in the air, sighed and fell into their silence.

All at once he brightened, looked up and said:

"Say, fellows, I've got an idea!"

Then they surged up and fell upon him.

"Macnooder! Doc, help there; stand by me. Ouch!"

But Macnooder, purely the spirit of commerce, scudding for the west, called back, "Sorry, Shad — can't do it; the firm's dissolved!"